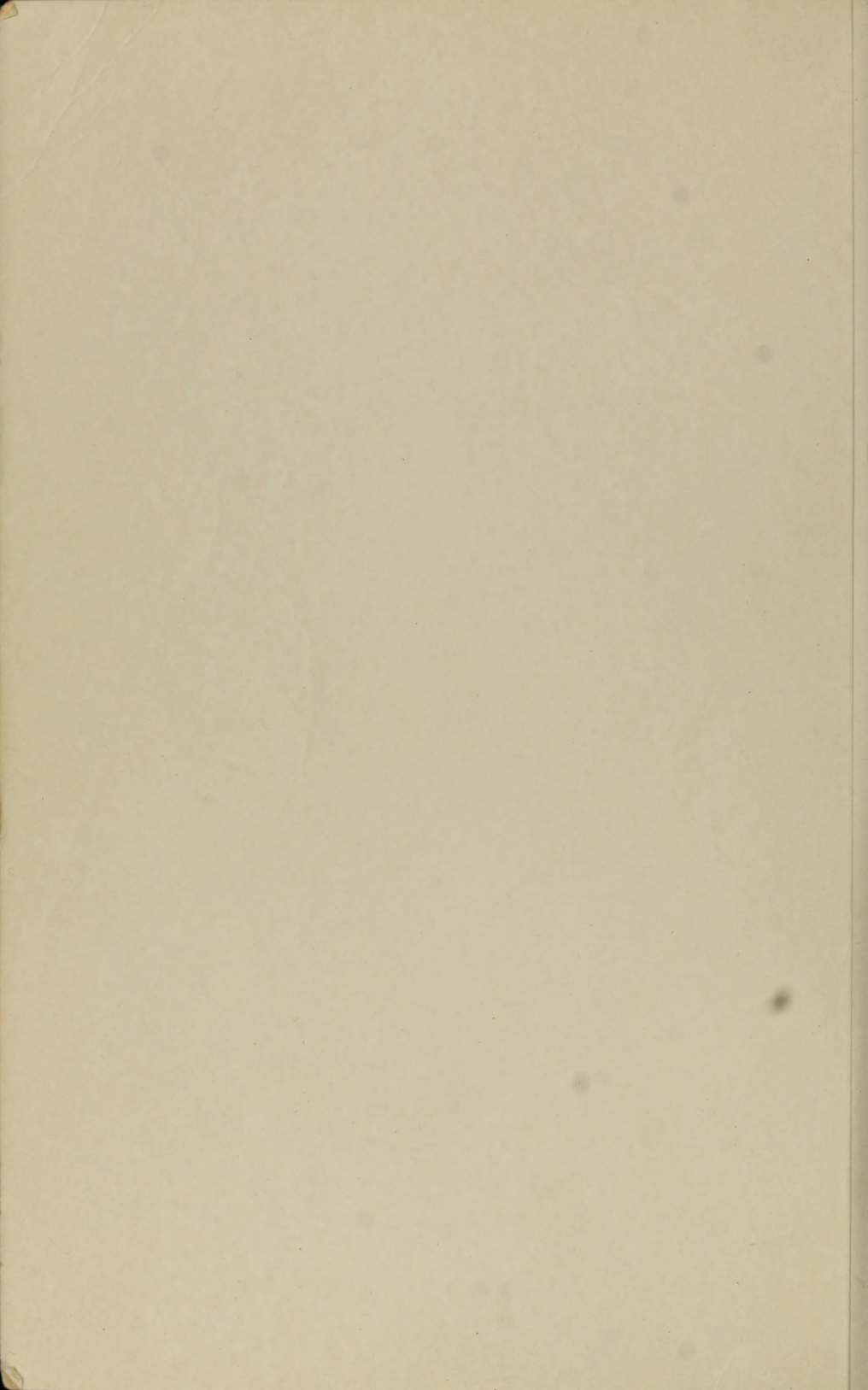


Ma Satya Bharti

DEATH COMES DANCING



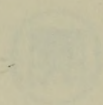
Celebrating Life with
Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh



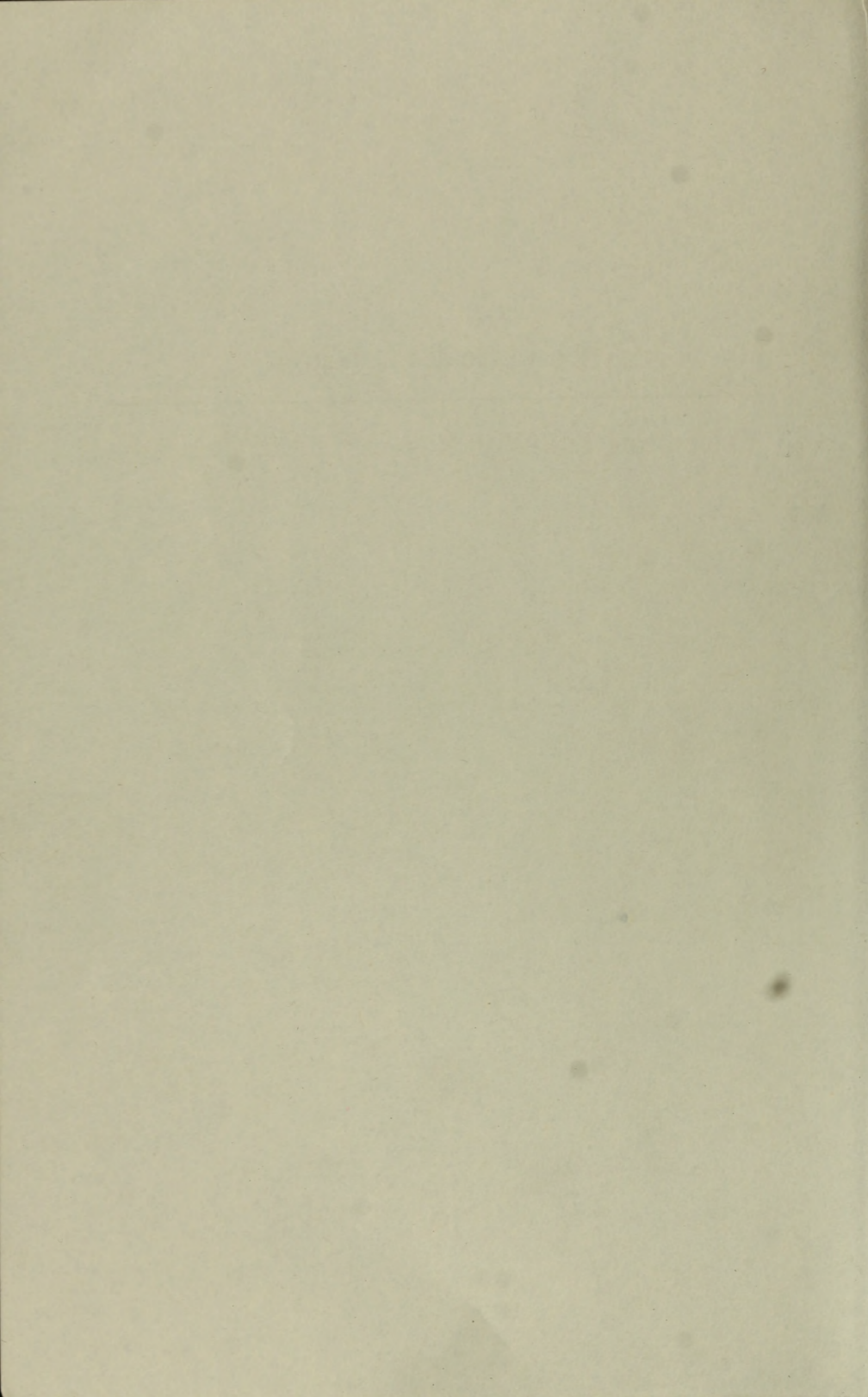
Death Comes Dancing

Celebrating Life With Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

Ms. Satya Bharti



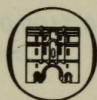
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Death Comes Dancing

Celebrating Life With Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

Ma Satya Bharti



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Blessed is the man who is courageous enough to be a disciple. It needs courage. It needs tremendous will-power to surrender. Cowards can't surrender; only very strong people can surrender. Surrender is possible only if you are grounded, centred. Then you know that you can surrender and you will not disappear. You can surrender, and the surrender will bring freedom to you. Via the guru, you will come to yourself.

To find a master is the greatest blessing that can happen to a man. More than that is not possible. God is far away; a master is a midpoint: he is human and yet divine. That's why Jesus says, 'I am the son of God, and I am the son of man.' He is a guru, a master.

The guru is more mysterious than God because he is a paradox: a meeting place of man and God.

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

For the last five years I've been a disciple of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, an enlightened master living in Poona, India. What an enlightened master is, and what it means to be with him, is what this book is about. I wanted to write the story of how Bhagwan works as a master, but instead, it seems, I've written my own story as a disciple. It's one version of Bhagwan, necessarily biased, necessarily incomplete. It's Bhagwan filtered through the prism of my experiences. More than facts, and less than the truth.

'The only way to come to the truth', Bhagwan says, 'is to pass through a great myth. Religion can't exist without myth. Because Christ's followers were so obsessed with history, with facts, they couldn't create a myth around Christ. That's why Christianity became so political, so steeped in dogmatism.

'An epic was created around Ram, a story was created around Krishna. Everyone was at liberty. Valmiki wrote one thing, Tulsidas wrote something else. No one can say that they are contradictory. Mark and Luke are contradictory because they are writing history, but Tulsidas and Valmiki are not contradictory because they are not concerned with history at all. They say, "Even that which we have been trying to say is not enough. It is not the whole story."'

Only fragments of what happens around an enlightened master can ever be recorded. The phenomenon of what happens, the actuality of it, goes beyond words. We can only try to indicate it. What I've written is purely subjective. It's Bhagwan as I see him, limited by my own experiences and my own vision, and limited also by my ability to communicate that vision.

There's no need for anyone to create a myth around Bhagwan; he's creating his own myths. 'I'm creating a fiction here,' he says. 'The fiction of the master and the disciple, the fiction of the god and the devotee. It's a myth really. You can move through the myth to reach the truth.

Preface

'An alive master is a myth: something of the untrue and something of the true, both. While I'm here the myth is alive; its heart is beating. Use this opportunity. When I'm gone, only the lie will remain.'

To write about a living myth is difficult. Each day is contradicted by every other day. This book is about some of those contradictions.

Poona, India

1977

INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

Part One

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY
540 EAST 57TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637

1968

Part One

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY
540 EAST 57TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILL. 60637

There's nothing I can do to prevent the deluge of people who will soon be descending on this place, and nothing I can do to help it. Its inevitability is written in every morning's sunrise. God lives in the house next door to me, thirty feet away. If I look out over my balcony as I often do, through the lush, green, jungle-like foliage, I can see the roof of the building in which he sleeps.

To say that God is alive and well and living in Poona may sound ridiculous, it may be a hard thing for people who haven't had the experience of it to believe, but it's the truth as I know it and live it from day to day, in continual amazement at the privilege. The days pass, the years pass, and more and more people come to know it. When I first heard about Bhagwan, six years ago, only a handful of non-Indians had ever heard of him. And those who came, it seems from reading the transcripts of interviews and informal talks given at the time, came in order to argue or to understand with mind or intellect. But a spiritual master like Bhagwan uses language, rational analysis and psychological insight as techniques to lead one beyond the narrow limitations of the mind — to a place where all is holy. His words are a trick. He says, 'I pacify your intellect with logic, with rational argument, only so that I can push you into the irrational.' But not so many of those who first came to him allowed themselves to be pushed beyond what they already knew, or suspected. Only a few stayed . . . and were transformed.

These days it's different. The time is right, where it wasn't right six years ago. That was the preparation for this, just as this — what is happening now at Shree Rajneesh Ashram in Poona, and all over the world for that matter — is the preparation for what will come next. As time goes on, Bhagwan will become more and more well known: it's inevitable. More and more people will come to India to be with him, and thousands (millions?) will come to believe in the godliness of this latest messiah after he has gone.

Then what we'll have is a new religion, to join the ranks of the

others that have grown impotent with the centuries. Bhagwan will be crucified, in his life or in his death; what he's doing will be destroyed by those most anxious to preserve it. It always happens.

'But not to worry,' Bhagwan would say, does say. 'While the bridegroom is here, celebrate, enjoy. While religion is fresh, young, alive, celebrate it.' When Bhagwan is no longer here, it will be time to mourn. For now, his presence, the individuality of his teachings and the contradictions inherent in everything he says, prevent what is happening around him from becoming a doctrine, a theology. Someday, yes, it will be a religion. Today, it remains the essence of religiousness.

Bhagwan is a catalyst. A gardener who coaxes our vulnerabilities out of the hard, protective shell in which they are encased, so that our roots may grow deep, our stems strong, our branches wide and our flowers plentiful. The security of the seed is a comfort, and a death. Bhagwan cracks us open, and lovingly cares for us in our period of transition and need. He takes away the security of the seed and gives us life, and more abundant life.

He gives as Jesus gave, and Buddha, and Lao Tzu, and all the other enlightened masters to whom we have listened without hearing, heeding or understanding. Maybe this time it's possible that we'll be able to hear. Many pretend to. Only a few, I suspect, do.

As for myself, I listen when I can, I hear what I can, I have no illusions of understanding. The moments of clarity when I can *see*, when I *know*, are few and far between. But because they've existed, I know that Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is one who can see, one who has attained to his own divinity.

An enlightened master means one who has achieved the highest realization of his own being. He has become the unique flowering of who he is; nothing remains inside him in seed form, every possibility within him has become actualized. Enlightenment is often visualized as the opening of a thousand-petalled lotus. It goes on flowering: it's an endless profusion, an endless growth, an endless fragrance.

It's a hard concept for us to grasp in the West. That's one of the beauties of being with Bhagwan; one doesn't have to conceive of some abstract perfection. Bhagwan is the perfection of himself — a fact that is as obvious as it is awesome to anyone who meets him. And if he can be a *bhagwan*, a god (the literal meaning of *bhagwan* is blessed one: one who has become aware of his own divinity), then that possibility lies within each of us. For those who need proof — as most of us do — he himself is the proof; as Buddha was the proof, as Christ was the proof.

Recently someone asked Bhagwan, 'Why do you call yourself "Bhagwan"? Why do you call yourself "God"?' He answered: 'Because I am. And because you are. And because everyone is. You may know it or you may not know it, but you cannot not-be-it.'

'I call myself "Bhagwan" to challenge you, to provoke you. I am just like you; there is nothing different about me. If I can become aware of who I am, if I can live in tremendous happiness, tremendous bliss, then the same is the possibility for you.'

When Jesus said, 'The kingdom of God is within,' this was his meaning. Buddhahood, Christ-consciousness, enlightenment are different names for the same phenomenon. When Christ said that he was the son of God, and, furthermore, that 'I and my father are one,' he was saying that he had reached this state of ultimate realization, and recognized his own divinity. He was not claiming to be the God who created the world: there's no such God. Bhagwan talks about God as the creation not the creator, the dance not the dancer. The dance and the dancer are one; the creator and the creation are one. Christ is God, or Krishna is God, or Bhagwan is God, in the same sense that we all are God. The only difference is that they know it, they live it.

'When Nietzsche said, "God is dead," he wasn't making a statement about God; he was making a statement about himself,' Bhagwan says. 'He was saying that for him there was no such thing as God, there was no possibility of transcendence. If you deny God, you deny the ability to go beyond that which you are. Nietzsche went insane. If there was no God then it was hopeless. Man was condemned to his misery, his suffering, his hopelessness. In denying God, Nietzsche denied his own possibility of becoming God.'

Buddhists don't believe in God, yet they call Buddha 'God'. Not to believe in God is a technique. To believe in God is also a technique. We play hide-and-seek with our Peeping-Tom concept of God — an all-seeing, omnipotent being who is constantly judging all our actions, and condemning them. And all the while, God is within. Waiting to be realized, waiting to be acknowledged. Waiting for us to bow down, in reverence, to our own being.

Laughing our way to God

It's impossible to 'explain' Bhagwan. One can only be with him, one can only experience him. One of the most delightful things about him, particularly because it's so unexpected, is his sense of humour. No one ever told me before that religion could be so much fun.

'I have to tell you jokes', Bhagwan says, 'because I'm afraid you're all religious people. You tend to be serious. I have to tickle you so you forget your philosophies, theories, systems and you come back to earth. If I don't bring you back to earth you may become more and more serious, and seriousness is a cancer; it's the greatest disease there is.'

Every morning at his ashram in Poona, Bhagwan lectures for an hour and a half on the scriptures of every religious tradition. One month he'll talk on Hindu yoga or tantra, the next month on the sayings of Jesus or Lao Tzu or Buddha and the following month on the parables of the Sufi, Zen or Hassidic masters. But through it all, in the middle of the most profound revelations, he manages to be uproariously funny. The audience becomes alive with laughter, belly-laughes exploding out of 500 or more people simultaneously. Exuberant, boisterous, irrepressible. Then the next moment Bhagwan is profoundly serious again — or what appears to be profoundly serious. For him, it's all the same game, the same play, the same *leela*.

A religious man is totally non-serious, Bhagwan tells us. He's spontaneous, playful, alive. 'I can't conceive of a Christ who never laughed,' he says. 'The Christian picture of Christ is serious, dead. Christ suffering on the cross. But can you picture a man who was always eating and drinking in public houses with his friends being serious? Can you picture a man who mingles with prostitutes, with the outcasts of society, never laughing? Christ celebrated, he enjoyed. That's why he was condemned. They couldn't understand him. The establishment is always serious and a religious man is always totally non-serious. He becomes a threat. Who knows? — others may follow. Then where will discipline be, where will order be? The priests and the politicians become afraid.'

Bhagwan has the most incredible dignity of any human being I've ever seen. Christ, from all reports, was essentially a man of the people. Gurdjieff was a lusty, robust, intense man who wheeled and dealt in the marketplace. Sufi masters may be tailors or taxi drivers, ordinary men whose uniqueness is unrecognized by those without the eyes to see. But Bhagwan, in his long white robes that cover him from neck to ankle, with his greying hair and beard (which began greying when he first became enlightened at the age of twenty-one), with his immaculately groomed body and the gracefulness of his movements and gestures, looks exactly as God would, if God were to choose to look like anything. Perhaps Buddha, who was born a king, had a similar kind of elegance and class. Something rarified; a precious, delicate flowering.

Bhagwan speaks as a poet writes, he is more incisive in his analysis of human nature than anyone I've ever read or heard about and he has the ability to penetrate beneath the masks we present to the world, to see our inner reality and guide thousands towards the realization of it; yet he could go on a television talk-show and have people rolling on the floor with laughter. 'Whenever I think you're about to fall asleep,' he says, 'I wake you up with a joke. Jokes are beautiful. When I'm talking about God, liberation, *moksha*, you begin to fall asleep. When I tell you a joke, you become instantly alert. Buddha is boring. But when I talk about the ridiculous exploits of Mulla Nasrudin you're never bored.'

Bhagwan is irreverent about everything, and at the same time deeply respectful. His jokes show us the absurdities of the ego, the absurdities of our conditioned attitudes, the absurdities of our usual ways of functioning: our fears, our vain attempts to repress what's inside us, our judgments, our insanities. He makes fun of us, he makes fun of himself, he makes fun of religion and the pretensions of spiritual seeking. It's not so much what he says as how he says it, and the fact that he says it at all. He delivers the most absurd lines with such absolute seriousness that it's impossible to take him seriously. We become convulsed with laughter out of all proportion to the joke itself.

'What do you think about life?' someone asked him recently at the morning discourse.

'I love it!' he answered seriously. Everyone laughed. A profound spiritual question and a profound spiritual answer. A question that took life seriously: an answer that didn't. 'Life is wonderful,' he said. 'Without it you're dead.' We all laughed.

Another day, the lecture was about to end. 'The last question,'

Bhagwan said. He read the question: 'Why don't your feet touch the ground when you walk?' Everyone laughed. It could go either way: he could talk about enlightenment or he could be absurd. Often the most serious discourses ended in frivolity. 'A very esoteric question,' he said. 'You should ask Swami Yog Chinmay this question.' Bhagwan just has to mention the name Yog Chinmay (the ashram pundit) for us to dissolve into helpless laughter. 'I myself had to ask him; I didn't know the answer,' Bhagwan continued. 'But now he has explained it to me.' By now the laughter was deafening. The thought of Bhagwan going to Yog Chinmay for advice was so ridiculous.

'I could explain it to you in many words,' Bhagwan said, 'but I've been speaking for nearly two hours now and my bladder is full' — we howled with laughter — 'so I'll have to be brief.' He paused for a moment. 'Because I wear shoes. Enough for today.'

Bhagwan reads approximately seventy books a week — books on philosophy, psychology, religion, science and the best jokes of 1977, or the best jokes from *Playboy*. He quotes Heidegger, Socrates, Heraclitus, Sartre, Einstein, Maslow and Bob Hope. People are always bringing him new joke books and sending him jokes they think he may like. Many of them find their way into the morning lectures, illustrating some esoteric point or some deep truth about human nature, that whoever first made them up probably had no idea was hidden within them.

When someone asked him once how he always managed to have exactly the right joke to illuminate whatever point he was trying to make, he told a story:

Once, it happened there was a king who was a great archer. He was the greatest archer in the whole kingdom. One day while he was riding through the forest outside his kingdom, he saw tree after tree painted with a bull's-eye, and in the exact centre of each bull's-eye was an arrow. He couldn't believe it. Who had done it?

He began to think, 'Perhaps I am the greatest archer in my kingdom, but here, outside my kingdom, it seems that there must be someone who is even a greater archer than I am. I must find out who this man is.'

So the king began to enquire. But no one knew who this master archer was. Finally the king, determined to find him, set out on foot in the forest to search. Further and further he went into the forest. And every few hundred feet there were more trees with bull's-eyes painted on them, and in the exact centre of each an arrow had been shot.

For many days the king continued to search. Finally one day he came across an old man. Very old. Decrepit, almost. The old man had

a bow in his hands, and in a bag slung over his back he carried dozens of arrows. The king was amazed. Could this old, decrepit man be the master archer he was seeking?

The king enquired: 'Tell me, old man, is it you who has shot the arrows I see in trees all over the forest?'

Modestly, the old man admitted it.

'It's amazing, simply wonderful,' the king said with great enthusiasm. 'I too am an archer. I am known to be a good one. And I have met archers from all over the world. But never have I met anyone to rival you. You never miss. Tell me, how do you do it? What is your trick?'

The old man smiled sheepishly. 'It's very easy,' he said. 'First I shoot the arrow. . . and then I paint the bull's-eye around it.'

'And that', Bhagwan said, 'is how I talk to you. First I have the joke – and then I think of something spiritual to put around it.'

To hear an enlightened master telling a joke, particularly if it's a dirty joke, is a shock to all our sensibilities, to everything that the mind expects of a spiritual teacher. Sometimes when Bhagwan is being particularly outrageous, I have the feeling that he is doing it for one particular person in the audience – to shock them, to awaken them, to force them to confront their suppressions, their prejudices; to give them an excuse to run away, to condemn him, to dismiss the truth of his words and of his presence.

The first time I heard him tell a joke with the word *horny* in it I couldn't believe it. It can't be done. A holy man *can't* talk like that; it's impossible. Or the first time he said fuck or schmuck – which he pronounced 'sa-muck' so, at first, no one had any idea of what he was saying. He explained it. 'Sa-muck', he said, 'is the 'iddis word' – meaning Yiddish word – 'for the male genitalia.' We laughed – he said it with such dignity. His pronunciations are often funnier than the joke itself. The fact that he says these words at all is funnier than the way he uses them. Or the time he talked about the priest who told the rabbi, 'If this wasn't Sunday, I'd bite your balls off!'

Most of us have very definite ideas of what a holy man is supposed to be like. Bhagwan is out to destroy every preconception that we have, every tendency to condemn, to judge, to compare. When someone asked him why he told these jokes – dirty jokes, religious jokes, ethnic jokes – he said, 'I don't judge. To me, everything is sacred; there is nothing that is profane. From sex to superconsciousness – I accept everything. My acceptance is absolute. A joke may look crude, it may look obscene, but to me nothing is obscene. Everything is beautiful

as it is; obscenity is just an interpretation of the mind.'

And of course, to illustrate the absurdity of calling anything in life obscene, he told a joke.

'Your so-called religious people are so busy condemning life', he said. 'They're afraid to see things as they are. They try to hide from the reality. I have heard about one old saint. A woman — one of his disciples — and her young son came to sit with him among the group of his followers. After a while, the young boy began tugging at his mother's arm. "Mommy, I have to piss," he said. The saint was shocked! But, hoping that it wouldn't happen again, he didn't say anything. The mother took the boy outside and a few minutes later they both returned. Soon the little boy's voice could be heard again: "Mommy, I have to piss."

'It was too much! The saint decided it would be necessary to speak to the mother. "You must teach your child manners," he told her. "This kind of language is not good."

"But what to do?" the mother asked. "He is only a young boy. Sometimes he has to, you know. And then he has to have some way to tell me."

"You do one thing," the old man suggested. "You make up some sort of code between you and the boy. Then whenever he has to go to the toilet, he can tell you through the code."

"What do you mean?" the mother said. "I don't understand."

"It's very simple," said the saint. "Any word will do. You can use the word *sing*. Whenever he has to go to the toilet he can tell you he has to sing."

"So the mother taught her son the code. And it worked, there was no problem. Whenever the boy had to relieve himself he would say, "I have to sing."

'It happened suddenly that the mother had to go away for a few days. She left her son in the care of her guru. At night, the little boy woke up. "I have to sing," he called out to the old man.

"Don't be ridiculous," said the saint, who by this time had forgotten the code. "It's the middle of the night. You can't sing."

"But I have to," the boy insisted. "I have to sing very badly."

'No matter what he said, the man couldn't dissuade the child. Finally, to appease him, he said, "Okay, but we don't want to wake the neighbours up, so come over here, keep it down, and sing in my ear."

'The little boy ran over to the saint's bed — and sang in his ear!'

After the lecture, Anand Prem wrote a furious letter to Bhagwan.

'Why do you use words like *piss*?' she asked. 'It's so unnecessary. You could have told the same story and used the word *urinate*.'

'That's the trouble with Anand Prem,' Bhagwan said in the lecture the next day. 'Anand Prem doesn't piss; she's too good to piss. She *urinates*!' We roared with laughter. Not at Anand Prem, but at ourselves. We all do the same thing in one way or another. Trying to hide behind pretty words or clinical words, trying to mask reality.

'Nothing in God's world is to be denied,' Bhagwan says. 'You just have to drop your interpretations. If you're shocked by my jokes or my language that's good. To shock you is my purpose. It will make you alert. It will wake you up from your sleep.'

It's Bhagwan's acceptance of everything — absolutely, unconditionally — that seems to be the one common thread that runs through all his teachings. Accept yourself, accept life, accept things as they are. The Ganges and the sewer water — to Bhagwan, both are equally sacred. He tells us to accept our pains and our frustrations, to accept our non-acceptance.

Don't be serious about your seriousness, don't be depressed by your depressions, don't be angry at your angers. Who you are is who you are. Life is how it is. You can refuse to see it, you can insist on your own version of reality — which is what most people do; everyone is myopic in his own way — or you can sit back and watch what's happening in you and around you, without judging it, without wanting it to be anything other than what it is. To watch is to begin to see. To see is to begin to know. And to know is to begin to transcend.

'You are gods and goddesses in exile,' Bhagwan tells us. His every effort seems to be to help us accept ourselves, so that we can begin to see the divinity that's within, so that we can drop all the peripheral nonsense that we carry around with us and be what we are. Our potentiality, our godliness, is blocked by so much garbage — neuroses, suppressions, desires, ambitions, jealousies, angers, fears, ego-trips, body blocks, mind blocks, societal and parental conditionings, accumulated knowledge, accumulated possessions — that we live at a far remove from our ultimate possibilities. Bhagwan is a surgeon. He cuts through it all with deft precision. He strips off our masks, our clothing, and reveals us to ourselves in naked splendour. He does it through a thousand tricks, not the least of which is laughter. He teaches us to laugh at ourselves, to laugh at the world, to laugh at our own suffering. He helps us to strip away layer after layer of false accumulations. To be with him is to be engaged in a getting-rid-of process. It's not to acquire

something new — it's not to become holy, to become a god — it's to get rid of all those things that prevent us, here and now, this very moment, from *being* God. 'For', Bhagwan says over and over again — it is, perhaps, the main emphasis of his teachings — 'you *are* that.'

Dynamic Meditation

I'm God, you're God. One can buy it philosophically; it's a pleasant enough concept, ego-fulfilling in the extreme. Who would *want* to deny it? But if you're sitting in your office with your bottled-up frustrations and angers, or if you're waiting to pick up your children from school — alienated, bored, watching life go by — the concept doesn't mean much. No concept can.

If someone had said to me a few years ago, 'Happiness is your choice. Unhappiness is also your choice. You don't *have* to be anything you don't *want* to be. You are Brahma, you are God,' I probably would have laughed at the absurdity of it, the ludicrousness, and felt annoyed by it somehow, threatened. If my life wasn't ecstatic, if I wasn't really happy, was it my fault? No one in the world was really happy; it wasn't possible. Growing up meant coming to accept the impossibility of it. My past justified my present. I was condemned to being who I was, or who I seemed to be.

In the West we define ourselves according to our roles. I was someone's wife, someone's child, someone's mother. When I got a divorce, liberated myself from some of my imprisonments and began to take my writing seriously because other people did, I changed my definitions: I was a writer, a poet, an artist. I defined myself according to a different function, a different role. But who was I, underneath it all? I was still as neurotic as everyone else, I still suffered as much as everyone else, I was still willing to settle for moments of pleasure and illusions of happiness and freedom. Maybe I was trying to grasp more of life than most people — I had stopped saying yes to my conditioning, I had stopped being what others would have me be; I'd begun to rebel — but I was still trapped by my own conceptions. I didn't know that anything more was possible, that just to *be* could be so ecstatic. 'Life is!' I want to shout to my children, my parents, my friends from the past. 'Just to breathe, just to be alive. Can you feel the ecstasy of it?' But how to tell them? What to say?

I wouldn't have thanked anyone who had tried to tell me a few years ago that I could grow beyond the possibilities I had conceived of for myself – even though the chances were that I would never fulfil them. But one thing leads to the next, in an inevitable progression; the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. 'The miracle is not that someone achieves enlightenment,' Bhagwan says. 'The miracle is that someone begins. That someone with all his fears, all his distortions, all his madnesses, all his blindnesses begins. When a Buddha achieves, when a Christ achieves, it is not a miracle. They are capable. But when someone with all his incapacities takes the first step, begins the journey, it's the greatest miracle possible.'

I don't really know what the first step was for me. I don't think that at any point in the past I could have looked ahead and predicted that one day I would end up in an ashram in India with an enlightened master. It had never been one of my dreams. It had never even been anything that I knew, at least consciously, existed as a possibility.

I had been doing hatha yoga for some time in order to strengthen my back, which was weak from too many pregnancies too close together, but I wasn't interested in any of the spiritual aspects of yoga. I did yoga because it was good for my body, and eventually began teaching it because I needed the discipline of teaching to keep it up. But meditation? Becoming calm, peaceful, quiet? It sounded incredibly dull. A means through which one could learn to tolerate the petty annoyances of life; a tranquillizer, a help in 'coping'. It wasn't for me. I wanted to live life more fully, not learn how to resign myself to what was.

Bhagwan's concept of meditation is totally different from what most people mean by it. The techniques he's devised are physically active and emotionally intense. They're stimulants, not tranquillizers. TM and other pragmatic, how-to-do-it, as-easy-as-1-2-3 approaches put the conscious mind to sleep. Bhagwan's techniques make the unconscious conscious. It's a painful process sometimes, but always an exciting and dramatically revealing one. And the only possible approach that would ever have appealed to me.

Moreover, as I see it, it's the only one that really works. The problem with most of us today is that we're already too suppressed, too conditioned, too out of touch with our unconscious. Meditation techniques that work through discipline, through the control and suppression of our unconscious impulses, do the exact opposite of what needs to be

done. We don't need to suppress ourselves more. We need to be allowed the freedom and the opportunity to express everything that's inside us, the thousand and one things that we've spent our lifetime repressing. We have to throw everything out, to rid ourselves of our neuroses. Then we won't have to practise meditation; we'll live it. It will be spontaneous; a happening not a doing, a being not a becoming.

We have preconceived ideas about everything: how we should behave, how we should look; what's good, what's bad; what's success, what's failure; how we should live, how we should love; how we should work, how we should play; what will make us happy, what will bring us pain. We spend our lives trying to conform to our conceptions, trying to mould ourselves into some pattern that's not unique to us. And then, when we can't do it, we consider it our failure. We create our own climates, we drown in our own juices.

'Neurosis is the normal condition of man,' Bhagwan says, 'because every man passes through a training, a conditioning. He is not allowed to just be whatever he is; he has to be moulded into a particular pattern. Only a fragment of his being is allowed to be expressed while the remaining part remains repressed. This creates a division, a schizophrenia.

'Every man is schizophrenic, divided: divided against himself, fighting against himself. Something has to be done to release this neurosis, to bring your divided parts nearer. My emphasis is first to dissolve your inner division, to make you one.

'Your sanity is just a façade. You've accumulated so much madness within you. The whole world is mad; that's why catharsis is needed. If you try to sit silently, you go on suppressing your madness and it goes on bubbling inside you. I'm not going to force sanity on you from the outside. Rather, I'm going to bring out your insanity. When it is pulled out completely, thrown into the wind, sanity will happen to you. You'll grow, you'll be transformed. That's the meaning of meditation.'

I had always thought that meditation meant sitting quietly, saying something or staring at something. Dull. Stultifying. It sounded like death: the silence of the tomb. Bhagwan talks about an alive silence, a silence that's filled with energy, that throbs with life. His meditation techniques are dynamic, active, alive. Because we don't know how not-to-do, they begin with doing. Because we don't know how to be passive, they begin with activity. They don't impose silence and stillness on you from the outside. Instead, they rid you of your tensions,

they purge you completely, they exhaust you, so that your mind becomes still. The silence floods your being. It comes out of you from nowhere. It sneaks up on you and overwhelms you.

When I first started practising Dynamic Meditation, one of Bhagwan's major techniques, I was interested in it primarily as a psychotherapy. A woman I knew from one of my yoga classes had gone to India to meet Bhagwan. After three weeks with him, she had come back totally transformed. I had never seen such a remarkable change in anyone in my life. It was as though Katherine (or Mukta as she was now called) had become who she really was. Her make-up was gone, her artificial if beautiful façade was gone, her sophisticated personality was gone, and in their place Mukta had a real face, a real being. She wore long orange robes that hid her figure, her hair was loose and unstyled, she looked as if she had been through a lot; but in place of the false beauty of before, there was an inner beauty coming from her now, a radiance.

I asked her about what had happened to her. Was it painful? Her face indicated it. Was it blissful? Her face indicated that too. It looked as if she had died and been reborn, as if she had been touched by the hand of God.

What had happened to her, she told me, was Bhagwan. 'Just to be with him is so beautiful, so blissful,' she said, and she started laughing, making me want to laugh along with her, making me envious of whatever it was that made her laugh so genuinely, without apparent cause.

Yet whenever Mukta tried to talk about Bhagwan, she sounded like a giggling, worshipful adolescent talking about her favourite rock star. I was disappointed. A personality cult, some guru-trip, was the last thing in the world I felt any attraction for.

But Mukta also told me about what she called 'the meditation'. It attracted me as much as her attitude towards Bhagwan didn't. 'The idea of the technique', she explained, 'is that unless one releases all the madness that's inside, one can't transcend it. And then, when you've released the chaos, when you've expressed it with your total being and you're exhausted by the effort, meditation happens.'

Whether or not meditation would ever 'happen' to me — or even what it was — didn't interest me particularly, but the idea of moving deeply into my own madness did. Moving into it without being trapped by it, without remaining stuck in it for God knows how long. And a part of me, I suppose, was simply interested in seeing what would happen. An intellectual curiosity; a journalist's need to discover some-

thing new; a poet's need to dissect and expose his anguish for the sake of art. 'The meditation' sounded like a powerful technique to help me uncover more of the unconscious layers that I was trying to create poetry out of.

'Just try it,' Mukta suggested. 'Do it as an experiment. There's nothing to either believe in or disbelieve. If something happens through it, good. If nothing happens, that's good too.'

It seemed fair enough. What did I have to lose? I went to Mukta's house several days later to try the technique. Caught.

Dynamic Meditation begins with ten minutes of deep, fast breathing through the nose, Mukta explained. Keeping the body loose. Allowing the force of the deep breathing to move the whole body.

The breathing was difficult for me to do the first time, torturous. I could breathe deeply or I could breathe rapidly, but to do both seemed impossible. Long before the breathing period was over, my chest was hurting, my neck was hurting. My whole body was moving with the effort, aching with the effort. *I don't want to do this*, I started saying to myself. *I hate it, I hate it, I can't do it, I just can't* — and then suddenly my breathing took over and 'I' wasn't doing it; the breathing was happening by itself. Fast. Deep. Intense. A part of me stood away watching in amazement as the breathing mechanism took over and 'I' was no longer needed. Incredible!

Then suddenly my body began to twirl around and around. My arms spread out, the deep breathing somehow still continuing, I twirled around faster and faster, picking up new energy as I twirled. A second wind, a third wind, a tenth. . . .

I don't know at what point Mukta said to enter the second stage of the technique (the catharsis that Bhagwan says is necessary, today, before authentic meditation can happen). Spontaneously, I had entered it. I was still twirling, I was crying, I fell down. I tried to stand up again. Every time I tried, I fell down. I couldn't stop crying.

I wasn't a baby any more; I was a big girl. *Look at me, Mommy. I can walk. Look, Mommy!* The words weren't there — to try to verbalize didn't occur to me; I didn't even know that words existed — but the feeling of wanting my mother to look at me, to watch me with approval as I showed her what a big girl I was, that I could walk, was there. There was no verbalization of the feeling, just the feeling. Deeply painful, deeply frustrating.

I can do it! I can! I can! But every time I tried to stand, to walk, I

would fall. Over and over again. I *knew* I could do it. Why couldn't I show her? I wanted to show her so badly.

Then suddenly I was walking. I was so proud of myself, as if it was the greatest thing in the world that anyone had ever done. *Ob look at me! I can walk!* I started laughing and laughing.

Until finally the laughter turned to crying again and one memory, one re-experience of the past, was superimposed upon the other and the only constancy was the depth of my anguish.

'Now enter the third stage,' Mukta said. 'Say *hoo-hoo-hoo*. Stand up. Try to do it standing up.'

After ten minutes of deep, fast, chaotic breathing, and another ten minutes of allowing the awakened energy to be expressed in any way it has to be — crying, laughing, dancing, screaming, reliving the traumas of the past, relieving the tensions of the present — for ten minutes one has to vigorously repeat the Sufi mantra *hoo*. 'Hoo-hoo-hoo' — one has to bring the chanting (the shouting) to a peak, a climax, an orgasm. It's this third stage that changes Dynamic Meditation from a highly effective psychotherapeutic tool to something that goes beyond psychotherapy. The technique for awakening the unconscious is similar to some of the methods developed by the growth movement, and the freedom to express what has been awakened is similar, but during this third stage, the energy that has been awakened through breathing, and thrown out through the catharsis of the second stage, changes direction. It begins to move inward and upward.

'Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!' I shouted, I cried it. I could hear Mukta in the background quietly encouraging me every time I stopped for a second. 'Keep going,' she'd say. 'Just keep repeating *hoo-hoo-hoo*.'

I kept at it until nothing existed but the sound, nothing existed but the intensity of my effort.

'Now stop everything,' Mukta said finally. 'Let your body drop to the ground. Don't do anything. Just be still.'

My body dropped to the ground: depleted by the effort of the first three stages. It was exhausted, my mind was exhausted, but the energy was still alive inside me like an electric current. It wasn't moving into thought — I was too tired to think, too drained from the catharsis. It wasn't moving into body tension — my body was too tired to fidget, to move; it was utterly relaxed. The energy was just *there*, somehow. Throbbing, alive. Running through me, but not me. And in another way feeling more like me, the reality of me, than my body or mind or emotions.

Meditation happened. There was no way for it *not* to happen. Whether I wanted it to or not, whether I believed in it or not. Peace. Bliss. That-which-has-no-words. The beyond within.

Bhagwan used to say that because we're so suppressed, so out of touch with our unconscious and with our bodies, it can take anywhere from three weeks to three months before we're able to move into Dynamic Meditation enough to feel the effects of it. But for me, the technique was powerful from the very beginning. It was totally unlike anything I had ever experienced before, or anything I might have anticipated.

Each time I did the meditation after that it was a more intense experience than the time before. Past memories came up, and even what appeared to be past-life memories. More often than not, the experiences were deeply painful.

Once I saw my son — no, I don't want to write about it. Just thinking about it, I can feel the fear coming back again.

'No!' I screamed. 'No! No! I don't want to go into the other room, I don't want to see, I don't —' But I knew, somehow, what was in there. Knew and dreaded. I couldn't go in, I had to. And there he was: hanging. A rope around his neck. I crossed myself, I screamed. Screamed and cried and lamented in a language I didn't know but which Mukta said later sounded to her like Italian. The sounds of anguish poured out of me, uninterpretable because I didn't understand the language I was speaking.

The experience was absolutely real. I was in it, I was it, it was happening. But added to that was another whole dimension of being, where I was outside the experience, watching it. My son, then, did not look at all like a grown-up version of my son Billy. What was I seeing, what did it mean?

During another meditation session I relived an existence as a cat, a terrifying experience. Learning how to kill: pouncing on a mouse, mauling him, devouring him. I tasted blood in my mouth; I was repelled by it. And beside me sat my mother, a large grey cat, urging me on, forcing me to do what my every inclination rebelled against. I was a cat: I had to kill, I had to learn how, I had to feed on my killings.

'Hoo-hoo-hoo' — the third stage of the technique interrupted the memory, the fantasy, and rechannelled the energy from fear and repulsion into acceptance and peacefulness. After the experience — which I didn't understand: was it a memory or a metaphor? — I found that suddenly, inexplicably, all the things I had thought would take a

lifetime to work out with my mother had dropped completely. I no longer blamed her for our mutual past. There was no one to blame. It always was; it always had been. She was no more responsible for being who she is, who she was, than a fly is responsible, than a cat is responsible, than I'm responsible. I was free to love her again. Even forgiveness wasn't necessary.

Things that would have taken years to resolve through psychoanalysis were resolved in a single session of Dynamic Meditation. They dropped one by one. As more of the unconscious was uncovered, new understandings were integrated immediately into the way I perceived myself and the world.

The whole process was fascinating. But more than fascinating, it was transforming. And after each session of Dynamic Meditation — no matter how painful the ten-minute stage of catharsis was — came the meditation, a continually unexpected gift and benediction. I went through momentary hells, and was left with a feeling of peacefulness and calmness.

I began doing the meditations more and more often, several times a week. Despite myself, despite my hesitations and fears and skepticism, I became addicted to what was happening to me, addicted to my own growth.

Taking sannyas

It took a year and a half to get me to India. By that time I was already a sannyasin, which means that I had taken initiation (in New York, by proxy), I had become a disciple of Bhagwan's, I had surrendered to him. Initiation to a master means that someone who is asleep is asking for help from someone who is awakened. It's saying: 'I'm blind. I recognize that I can see the reality only through my distortions, my projections. You who can see, whose vision is unclouded, guide me. I place myself in your hands. I surrender to your knowing.'

To surrender to a master isn't to surrender anything that's real. On the contrary, it's to surrender, to give up, all the dreams, all the peripheral accumulations that the ego is made up of. We can't surrender anything that's real, Bhagwan says, because as we are we don't have anything that's real. Everything about us is false, borrowed, inauthentic. When you surrender to a master you take the first step in renouncing the inauthentic, so that a space is created within you where your uniqueness can begin to grow, to flower. It's renouncing the false so that you can begin to discover the real: what you were meant to be, what you really are beneath all your conformities and conditionings.

It's not that you surrender to *someone*. It's surrendering to the existence, to the flow of life; it's surrendering to what is. But because we don't know what is, because we're not able to see it without projecting our own dreams on it, the guru is needed as an intermediary. Surrendering to the guru is a step towards surrendering to the impersonal divine. It's the first step. Renouncing the guru in the end, when one has realized one's own divinity, is the last.

'The work of a master is very contradictory,' Bhagwan says. 'First he has to create a situation in which you fall in love with him, in which you allow him to guide you. Then he has to create a situation in which you drop him. He is like a ladder. You move on the ladder but the ladder is not the goal; you must not cling to it. Only when you drop the master have you followed him completely.'

For me, at the time, to surrender to Bhagwan, to take initiation from him, meant little more than accepting him as my psychological guide, my therapist. I didn't know what an enlightened master was or what the master/disciple relationship implied, but I knew that Bhagwan was a master psychologist, a genius, a magician in the inner alchemy that transforms one's being. The sannyasins I had met were proof of that. So was Dynamic Meditation, which by that time I had been practising off and on, increasingly regularly, for over a year. Whether Bhagwan was a Christ or not — which his sannyasins seemed to suggest, though I found it hard to believe — seemed irrelevant. Perhaps taking sannyas was nothing but an empty gesture, a ludicrous game — wearing orange clothes, calling myself by some no doubt unpronounceable Sanskrit name, wearing a mala (a string of wooden beads with a picture of Bhagwan attached to it) — but what difference did it make? Maybe there was something more to it than that. How could I know without trying it?

Chaitanya, whom I had met a few months before at Mukta's house, and who by now was running a meditation centre in upstate New York, told me that if I took sannyas the changes that were happening to me through Dynamic Meditation would happen that much faster, and the meditations themselves would be that much deeper. 'If you allow yourself to come closer to Bhagwan,' he said, 'he can work with you more directly. The orange clothes, the mala and the new name are just techniques. They're not something mystical that has to be believed in. They're techniques that work, that's all. They're to help us to become discontinuous with the past, so we can drop our past identifications and conditionings. Sannyas means dying to the old and becoming open to the new. It's a rebirth. I think you're ready for it. Take the jump. Try it.'

Taking sannyas is always a jump. It's not something you can decide intellectually to do. It's something totally unknown, so on what basis can you make an intellectual decision about it? The second time Chaitanya met Bhagwan, without asking him whether he wanted to take sannyas or not Bhagwan put a mala round his neck, told him that he should begin wearing orange clothes and that from now on he would be known as Swami Christ Chaitanya. Chaitanya didn't have any idea what sannyas was all about, but he put on orange clothes and suddenly found that he was a sannyasin. It wasn't a concept for him; it wasn't something he ever thought about. It was what he was living; it was his life.

'To me,' Bhagwan says, 'sannyas is not something very serious. Life

itself is not very serious, and one who is serious is always dead. Sannyas means to live life purposelessly, to take life as play and not as work. It means to live life to the optimum, to live in total freedom.

'To be initiated into sannyas means that you have come to recognize that you are just a seed, a potentiality. It's a decision to grow, a decision to drop all your securities and live in insecurity. You are ready to take a jump into the unknown, the uncharted, the mysterious.'

My mind still rejected the Eastern religious aura implied by the clothes, name and mala, but Bhagwan's sannyasins were so different from the Hare Krishna people, and others on various spiritual trips — they were so vibrant, so alive, so different from each other, and so mercifully non-serious about themselves and Bhagwan and sannyas — that I could see it was only my own prejudice that had prevented me from taking sannyas long before. I hadn't wanted to define myself as some religious fanatic. I was an atheist, a pantheist — for me to suddenly start wearing orange clothes seemed so inappropriate. But as a technique I could understand it. That we're affected by what we wear is obvious. It wasn't accidental that I had worn nothing but jeans and sweaters for years. If I couldn't even drop the costume of my own particular brand of arty nonconformity, what kind of freedom was that? I had just exchanged one set of values for another. Another bondage.

Bhagwan was telling me to wear orange clothes because the colour itself would have an effect on the way I felt. The colour orange (which I had never worn before, nor particularly liked) was so vibrant that it would affect everything I did. It would affect both the way people saw me and the way I saw myself. It would force me to confront some of my own prejudices. 'Can't hurt, might help,' was pretty much my thought regarding it. It was worth a try.

So I took sannyas: an extraordinary event that changed me, in a moment, into someone totally new. The moment the mala was placed around my neck and Chaitanya, who was initiating me on behalf of Bhagwan, told me my new name, I suddenly began laughing and laughing uncontrollably. How funny it all was; how funny life was! Is this what I had been afraid to do for so long that I had waited and waited to do it, until it was foolish to wait any longer?

The laughter went on and on. I remember hearing the sound of it coming out of me, and wondering where it had been hiding for all those years. I remember thinking over and over again, 'So *this* is why Mukta laughs all the time. *Now* I get it,' and I kept on laughing, not knowing

what I was getting, and finding it uproariously funny that it didn't matter.

I could feel my face stretched in the extraordinary grin that I had seen before on Mukta's face. Her laughter poured out of me, her broad smile stretched the muscles of my face till they hurt, a hilariously funny circumstance as far as I was concerned. The whole thing was so comical, so absurd. Chaitanya was right: Jill had died; Satya was born. Had anything ever been so funny before?

The laughter, once begun, wouldn't stop. It went on for hours. I went back home to my children and my lover and my career and threw out all my clothes that couldn't be dyed orange, and dyed all the clothes that could be dyed, and became a sannyasin. And kept on laughing. Even when, especially when, the pain of growth is sharpest and the walls of everything I know are crumbling around me. The part of me that witnesses the rollercoaster ride that being a sannyasin means *knows* how funny all my despairs are, *knows* that none of it is real, *knows* that the world is an absurdly funny play, a hilarious game. The laughter waits to come out, it's always there — bubbling, looking for an opportunity to escape, to be released.

And the comedy around Bhagwan, whether it's the jokes he tells during the morning lectures and the evening darshans, or the absurdity of the life that flows around him, or the frivolity of his sannyasins and their irreverent attitudes, even when they're engaged in 'serious' pursuits — meditating, working, loving, raising children, raising consciousness, raising hell — provides ample opportunity for the laughter to be expressed.

Life is unendingly funny. Do you see it; do you feel it? I suffer, therefore I am. I laugh, therefore I am not. When 'you' are not, when the ego dies, only laughter is. Existence is one big belly-laugh, a beautiful joke. The birds are laughing, the trees are laughing, the stars are laughing, the Buddhas, the Christs and the Bhagwans are laughing. Only we sit, locked inside our conditioning, with unsmiling faces.

'What was your original face, before your mother and father were born?' the Zen masters ask. I don't know, but I suspect it's the face of laughter. A formless form. An energy exploding upon itself, benignly content with its own meaningless absurdity.

Remembering past lives

During my first trip to India, I moved from one experience to the next: catharsis after catharsis, revelation after revelation. Each day, superficially the same as the day before, was filled with my new experiences and new knowings. I didn't believe in past lives, but I began experiencing more and more things that couldn't be explained in any other way. I didn't know what kundalini energy was, but I began to feel it inside me.

I had been doing Dynamic Meditation almost every day when I was in the States, but doing it on the beach in Bombay at 6 o'clock every morning with a group of sannyasins was a totally different experience.* My catharsis in the second stage of the technique went deeper than it had ever gone before. I lay on the sand; I screamed, I cried. Wetness poured from my eyes, my nose, my mouth: my hair and clothes became matted with the outpouring. I lost myself totally in the catharsis. My body jerked and writhed in epileptic-like movements. I vomited, and kicked the sand ferociously to cover the mess I had made. Anger came up. I punched the air, I growled like a lion, I killed my mother and my father and the beggar I had seen on the street that morning and a multitude of strangers I'd never met.

I fell to my knees. In my hand was a dagger. I raised my hands above my head, both of them clutching at the dagger. Tears poured down my face. I had to do it, I had to kill. One quick stroke and it would be done — the dagger in my belly, my death accomplished. Do it! Do it! It was so easy, just—

My arms shook. I tried to force them down — quick! do it! — but they wouldn't drop. My whole body was quivering with the strain and the fear. Finally, finally—

Ahhhhhhhh!

The stab. The death.

*Bhagwan lived in Bombay until March, 1974, when he moved to Poona and Shree Rajneesh Ashram was founded.

I crumbled to the ground. Tears of relief. Tears of sadness. Tears of joy.

I had done it. Killed myself. It was done finally. I couldn't stop crying. Tears of relief that washed me, cleansed me; I was drenched in them.

Through my sobs I could hear the sounds of the other meditators: 'Hoo-hoo-hoo!' The third stage. I scrambled to my feet, raised my arms above my head and began jumping: 'Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!' Tears were gone, self-pity was gone, anger was gone, fear was gone. Only the *boos* existed: 'Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!'

All the anguish, all the pain, vanished like magic. I felt wonderful. I began to laugh. Was it all that easy, really? Was this all it took to get rid of lifetimes of trauma and despair? 'Hoo' — laughing and laughing — 'hoo' — laughing — 'hoo!'

I began to dance the *boos*, I began to sing them. My body became soft, fluid. I was a leaf floating gently in the air. A tree swaying. A butterfly.

'Hoo! Hoo!' The chanting picked up in intensity. Faster. Louder. I stopped dancing. The sound was like a hammer inside me. My body moved back and forth with the sound. The faster the chanting, the faster the movement. Building up, building up. . . .

'Stop!' the person leading the meditation called. 'Stop everything. Don't move. Just allow your body to be completely relaxed, completely still.'

I fell to the ground. Silence. Stillness. I disappeared into nothingness, empty space.

The fourth stage of Dynamic Meditation usually lasts for ten or fifteen minutes, but I would lie there — lost, oblivious to anything other than the peaceful, blissful feeling inside me — for half an hour, longer. When I would get up, finally, the sun would be rising. I would watch the last star disappearing slowly in the increasing light of the sky. It would disappear, and I would disappear along with it. Nothingness. Indescribable bliss.

At last, reluctantly, I would get up and walk slowly back to the place where I was living. The bliss would stay with me while I walked. My body moved in a new way, with a new grace. Everything I saw while I walked had a new freshness about it. Breathing was the most ecstatic, blissful thing in the world to do. And walking. And humming, singing.

I would get back to my room and lie down, drowning again in the deep vibrations of this new stillness that I had never known before.

There would be no thoughts, no feelings even. An absence of descriptive words and phrases. An absence of myself.

The day would be spent doing nothing. But filled. I sat in meditation for hours on end, I learned the fine art of non-doing. I hallucinated, and/or remembered things from the past. I became aware of psychic phenomena and powers that I suppose lie dormant within each of us but which suddenly, temporarily, became available to me. I would look at someone and know what they were thinking. I would think something, and the next minute it would happen.

Bhagwan was giving a series of discourses on tantra. Before he would say a sentence, it would come to me. I would think it, and the next moment I would hear him say it. It was as though the thought hung suspended in the air waiting to be received. I would receive it. Bhagwan would receive it. He would speak.

I would sit silently on the floor in front of him. I would drink him. His hands danced their eloquent dance while he spoke, hypnotizing me, mesmerizing me. Sometimes, for no discernible reason, I would feel a flood of tears pouring down my face. It wasn't that I was crying; crying was just happening. It didn't seem to have anything to do with me at all.

Bhagwan would glance at me for an instant while he spoke. Suddenly the energy would rise up in me like a violent storm, an earthquake. My body would begin shaking. Violent tremor after violent tremor. It was as if I was a riveting machine, a hand-made motor that shook and jerked and sputtered in its own way. My body was doing its own thing, but another part of me stood outside the body, watching what was happening as if it had nothing to do with me.

Kriyas — powerful, uncontrollable energy manifestations — are fairly common to people who are moving deeply in meditation. They are a cleansing, a release of blocked energy. But I had never heard of *kriyas*, never heard of kundalini energy, so the experience was totally unexpected. I asked Bhagwan about it. 'I shake,' I told him. 'Sometimes during the lectures I lose control of my body. The body begins to shake and—'

He laughed. 'When Satya shakes,' he said, 'the whole room begins to shake. But it's nothing to worry about. It will go.' The shaking was coming, I was told, because the energy inside me was rising very quickly, and something was blocking its flow. Energy is felt only when there's some resistance to it. Kundalini (the passage through which the life-force moves) isn't felt because it's rising; it's felt because there are

blocks in the passage. The more blocks there are, the more kundalini will be felt. If there are no blocks, the upward flow of energy will be so smooth you won't even feel it. I shook so much because I had so many blocks. When the passage became clear finally — and the shaking, apparently, would help to clear it — the energy within me would begin to flow smoothly and the shaking would stop. Meanwhile it was an outlandish phenomenon that Bhagwan seemed to find amusing, and that many of the Indian sannyasins seemed very impressed with, and impressed with me because of.

I would begin shaking. 'Mmmm, the kundalini,' they'd say and smile knowingly. What was in fact the result of some block they took as a sign of great spiritual achievement. They had read too many things about meditation and kundalini and chakras. They knew too many things intellectually, without knowing them experientially. For me, the opposite was the case. I didn't know anything; I'd never read the literature. Perhaps that's why so many so-called spiritual experiences happened to me. I was innocent. I didn't know the first thing about this strange phenomenon of being with an enlightened master.

The shaking would happen during Bhagwan's lectures, it would happen when I went into his room to see him, it would happen while I was sitting silently in meditation, or reading.

I was proof-reading one of Bhagwan's books, which was being prepared for publication. Bhagwan was talking about Bodhidharma, the enlightened master who brought Buddhism to China. For nine years Bodhidharma sat facing a wall. He would only turn around, he said, for the man to whom he was to deliver Buddha's secrets. Hui-Neng, the person for whom Bodhidharma was waiting, came. He cut off his hand, gave it to Bodhidharma and said, 'Turn around *this moment* or I'll cut off my head!'

Bodhidharma turned around. 'You have given the right sign,' he said. 'I've been waiting for you.'

I stared at the name Hui-Neng on the page. I stared, in my mind, at his amputated limb. Tears were falling down my face, my body was trembling. Something about Hui-Neng, something about the story. . . . It was too familiar. It was something I remembered, something I had already known without knowing that I knew it. It was as though something was being revealed to me, another piece of the puzzle of my past, but I didn't know what was being revealed, or where it fitted into the whole cosmology of my unconscious.

Hui-Neng began to live with me, he became my companion. My

world was peopled with phantoms from the past — things remembered or half-remembered, places I had never been to but knew, people I had never met before but remembered, different selves, different bodies that I had once inhabited.

Sitting alone in my room I would close my eyes and feel. Suddenly it wouldn't be me sitting there, the present-day me. I would be living in another time, another place. Someone would call to me: I would answer. A whole life would unfold before me.

It was too much, really. I seemed to be living continually in one century or the other, but rarely in the present. I still don't know whether these experiences were signs that I was changing, indications of it, or the causes of the change itself. Sometimes I felt as if I couldn't take it any more. I couldn't believe that people actually *wanted* to know about their past lives. Other people would ask Bhagwan to give them techniques to help them to remember; I would go to see him and plead with him to make it stop. 'Please, Bhagwan,' I would cry. 'I don't want to know these things any more, I don't want to remember them. Make them stop! Please!'

A small, dark room. Haridas sits on the floor in front of the makeshift altar we've constructed. On the altar is a single candle and a picture of Bhagwan. Haridas gazes at the picture. After a while he begins singing devotional songs to it, love songs. I sit in a chair behind Haridas and slightly to the left of him. I watch him from the back while he sings. On the floor to the right of him is a small piece of chocolate wrapped in tin-foil. In the dim candlelight, I can see Haridas's back, I can see the metallic paper the chocolate is wrapped in.

Suddenly I'm not there, I'm somewhere else. Something else is happening. He sits by the side of the road. A holy man. For days he has been sitting there, unmoving. On the ground to the right of him lies something. I want it. I want it just for the sake of wanting. It's something small, something insignificant, something that I couldn't care less about. To this holy man it's everything, it's all he owns, the sum total of his possessions, and to me it's nothing, but I want it; I have to have it.

A circle of young boys surrounds me. I too am a young boy, younger than the rest. 'You do it,' one of them says, thrusting a knife at me. 'Go ahead. Do it!'

But no, I don't want to. No! I look at the holy man sitting there by the side of the road. I don't want to do it, I don't want to hurt him.

'No, please! No!' I try to back away, I try to escape, but the boy with the knife grabs hold of my arm, he won't let me go.

'Do it!' he says. It's an order. His hating, blazing eyes glare at me. They're eyes I've seen before, I know them.

A part of my mind stands suspended from the experience that's happening, questioning. Are they my mother's eyes? Whose? I know I've seen them before. I know I've seen them on my mother's face, but I don't think they originated with her. I think they frightened me on my mother because I had seen them before, seen them on someone else at a time—

The hating, blazing eyes glare at me relentlessly. 'Do it!' He is insistent, he thrusts the knife at me, he forces my fingers around the handle. I don't want to—the holy man, no. But I'm afraid not to. He'll kill me if I don't. He pushes me, they all start pushing me. The holy man sits there, as silently as ever. Oblivious. Not caring.

I'm standing alone, no longer one of the circle of boys. Alone, chosen. Me! The knife is in my hand. I look back at the others. Even in the darkness I can pick out my brother's blazing, fiery, angry eyes, compelling me. No, please, I want to cry, but those eyes command me, compel me. I'm more afraid of those eyes than I am of what I'm about to do.

Tears are pouring down my face. I don't want to do it. Haridas sings; the piece of chocolate lies on the floor beside him. From where I'm sitting I can only see his back. His back is the back of the holy man who's sitting by the side of the road in silent communion. I take the knife my brother gave me, I raise it above my head. I don't want to do it. Tears, an incredible profusion; I'm blinded by them. The holy man sits there so silently. There's nothing to be afraid of. All I have to do is do it. He won't stop me, he won't try to prevent his own murder, he doesn't care.

I stand right behind him. I can feel the cloth he wears over his shoulders against my leg. On the ground next to him lies the meagre, pitiful treasure that I'm about to kill him for, something I don't even want.

I raise the knife, I look at him, I recognize him. I suddenly realize that I know this holy man, I've known him before. In some life, before this life when I'm a young boy about to kill him, he cradled me in his arms. I sat at his feet and played. But it's too late to stop, the inevitable has been set in motion. My arms descend, the knife descends.

Oh God, what am I doing? My God, my God. What have I done?

I look down at my hands. They're covered with blood. I'm crying profusely. Haridas is still sitting there singing. I'm in the room with Haridas; I'm somewhere else, hundreds of years before.

I can't stop crying. My hands are covered with centuries-old blood, the memory of murder still in them.

The memory remained with me for days, like a presence that surrounded everything I did. It permeated my every act. My mind came in, interpreting, analysing, trying to find justifications.

A few days later at an evening discourse Bhagwan spoke about his last life and his last death. Suddenly it seemed so clear: the holy man was Bhagwan; I had killed God. Judas! Judas! My body started shaking, I started crying. The tension in my body and the pressure in my head kept building up, increasing. Any minute I would explode, any minute a death-scream would force its way out of me.

'In three more days,' Bhagwan was saying, 'I would have reached enlightenment. But it didn't happen. I was killed before it could happen.' I was sobbing and sobbing, I could hardly hear his words. 'And it is good that I was killed,' he continued. 'The person who killed me did a great service. It was what had to happen; otherwise I wouldn't be here now, that would have been my last life. So it was good. Judas acts in the service of God, he's God's instrument. Without Judas there would be no Christ, no Christianity. You should feel sorry for poor Judas. Such a heavy burden God has placed on him: to betray Christ. And remember, he loved Christ. No one loved Christ as much as Judas. That's why he could become God's instrument.'

The next day I went to see Bhagwan. 'Is it true?' I asked him. I had cried all night. I was still crying. 'These memories that come up, these things I remember, did they really happen? Are they memories or projections?' — hoping, praying that he would laugh and say it was just my imagination.

'Everything is true,' he said. 'You're remembering. But it's not important. What's past is past. You're not responsible for the past. Now is now. Only this moment exists.'

'Oh Bhagwan, forgive me.' I lay my head in his lap and cried. I clutched one of his hands. His other hand patted me gently on the head.

I lifted my head finally. He smiled at me. 'There's nothing to forgive,' he said. 'You do one thing. When these memories come up, you write about them. Write about them as though it was a dream, a story. They are true, I'm not saying they're not true, but you treat them as

though they're fiction. Write about them as if you're making the whole thing up. It will help you to be detached from your memories. You're not responsible for something you did twenty years ago so how can you be responsible for something you did twenty lifetimes ago? A child is not responsible for his actions. Only when you become aware do you become responsible.

'So write about these things. Make a fiction out of them. It will help.'

When I think about it now, I have the feeling that Bhagwan was allowing these experiences to happen to me, that in some way he was encouraging it, or creating the circumstances for it to happen. Both for my own growth and to test for himself, for his use with other disciples, whether these kinds of experiences are helpful or not.

Bhagwan only had a few dozen Western sannyasins then (only a handful of whom would be in Bombay at any one time), but many of them had experiences that were similar in intensity to my own. Intense catharsis, past-life experiences, deep periods of meditation. No matter how painful the periods of catharsis were, the aftermath of the pain was always the pain's justification. Deep meditation followed catharsis. Bliss followed pain. Emptiness followed purging.

We had much more personal attention from Bhagwan at that time than is possible now, when there are so many thousands of Western sannyasins. We were able to see Bhagwan as often as we wanted (every day if necessary); and when we went to see him, we met with him privately instead of in group darshans.* He could watch closely every experience that we had and guide us, support us, every step of the way.

When I first came to India, Bhagwan said to someone, 'Satya is very innocent. It will be easy to work with her.' But the experiences I had on that first trip — and, with decreasing frequency, during the year and a half that followed — made me less innocent. I began to expect them, to look for them as signs of growth. After a while, they became hindrances, blocks to further knowing.

I began to think of myself as being spiritual because these experiences were happening to me. A new source of food for the ego. I felt a certain subtle, unacknowledged superiority to other people who hadn't had such experiences. More food. My ego grew fat. And I ended up with many of the same problems I had had before. Attachments from the past were dropped. New attachments developed. I became indifferent

*For an hour and a half every evening, Bhagwan holds darshans. Darshan literally means vision: sitting in the presence of the master.

to things that had always bothered me, and sensitive to things that never had. I dropped the old but held on to the new.

My periphery may have changed dramatically in the last few years, but all the old problems of the ego and the mind still seem to be there. Problems caused by my conditioning. Problems caused by something that goes beyond my conditioning, something that preceded my birth and lies in the inheritance of my cells. Sometimes I lose awareness of how much I *have* changed, and just feel the sameness, the frustration of my redundancies.

As I see it, Bhagwan is no longer creating conditions for these kinds of experiences to happen because, in the end, moving into past lives and moving into periods of deep meditation is meaningless. It doesn't really work; it's irrelevant. I'm still me; I still have to deal with all the things that make me 'me', all the things that make me a separate, individual ego rather than a part of the whole. Bhagwan talks about the drop merging into the ocean. 'When the drop drops into the ocean it *becomes* the ocean.' I seem as determined as ever to remain a drop.

I'm more than I bargained for, and less than I hoped. The more things change, the more they remain the same. In many ways I'm back where I started from; there's no more hiding in spirituality. Bhagwan has plopped me right back down to earth. I fall with a thud. The dullness reverberates through my body.

I watch, I wait. Sometimes I'm angry, sometimes I'm sad. My ego gets affronted, I experience frustration. But at the same time, it's all so comical. Life is a soap-opera, taking itself so seriously.

If only we could learn to laugh at ourselves. Maybe that is all the Buddhas of the world have ever tried to teach us. To laugh our way, dance our way, sing our way to God.

Growing up: a return to innocence

By the time I left India — I had come for three weeks, but ended up staying three months — I felt like a new person. The outward circumstances of my life seemed inconsequential. Whether I was living in India or America, with my children or without them, with or without Chaitanya (who had been my lover for several months before I had left for India, but who had remained behind in the States, running meditation classes in Manhattan), was immaterial. Inside me was the reality. Something new had opened up. Like a small bird, its heart beat faintly but steadily. It was new, vulnerable, tentative. But alive. *There*.

Obviously not everyone who practises Dynamic Meditation ends up becoming a disciple of Bhagwan's. Nor does everyone who becomes a disciple immediately give up their family, their career, their home and their possessions the way I did. For some it happens that way. Others remain pretty much in the same set of circumstances they were in before taking sannyas, but without the same seriousness, without the same goal-oriented preoccupations.

The immediate change in my own lifestyle was probably more dramatic than for most people. My children moved in with their father, I broke up with my lover of three years and I stopped writing. When I returned from India, the apartment in New York that I had been living in with my children became a meditation centre, which Chaitanya and I, and two other sannyasins, ran for about a year. When it closed, Chaitanya and I began travelling around the States teaching meditation.

It seemed an unlikely sort of role for me. I had always been very shy before. Now suddenly I was speaking unselfconsciously in front of large groups of people, at the meditation centre and at growth centres, universities and humanistic psychology conferences. Speaking and performing. Flaunting my talents. Chaitanya would explain how to do Dynamic Meditation, and I would stand up and demonstrate the practised intensity of the deep, fast breathing of the first stage. Press the button: watch her breathe. All the things I had thought I could

never do I was suddenly doing. But all the while I kept wondering when the grown-ups would come along who *knew* how to do all the things Chaitanya and I were trying to do, who would just come along and *do* it.

By the time we knew how to run a meditation centre, Bhagwan suggested that we close it and begin travelling around the States, introducing people to his techniques and teachings. By the time growth centres finally started asking us to run programmes for them — for over a year we had begged them to allow us to — it was time to stop doing that and move to the ashram in Poona, which was a little over a year old by then. Only when we didn't know what we were doing could it be a way for us to grow, to learn something new about ourselves. One of the things that a master does is to place you in situations that, left to yourself, you would never voluntarily move into, situations that make you feel uncomfortable and incompetent.

Teertha, who had started the largest growth centre in England before taking sannyas, and was well known in the growth movement in both America and Europe, had immediate entrée into places where Chaitanya and I could only stand at the door like beggars. For him to do what Bhagwan was having us do would have been easy: therefore, there was no point in him doing it. Instead, he was in India editing Bhagwan's books (which he knew nothing about doing), while Chaitanya and I (who were competent editors) travelled around the country introducing Bhagwan's techniques and Bhagwan to whoever was willing to listen. Eventually Teertha began leading encounter groups at the ashram, and Chaitanya and I began editing Bhagwan's discourses, but for two years we were each doing what the other was qualified to do. Stumbling along in our own ways. Growing.

For us, running a meditation centre, lecturing at universities and running groups at growth centres was a learning process. Hardly anyone in America had heard of Bhagwan at the time, and no one, certainly, had ever heard of us. There was no way for us to *make* things happen. We didn't have the background, the experience, the expertise. All we could do was to allow things to happen. We just had to float, to flow, to let existence play its game through us with as little resistance as possible. Things happened, often in spite of us. Through us, but not by us.

The grown-ups never came along. I'm beginning to see, now, that Bhagwan is never going to let the grown-ups — those who are competent, efficient, proficient — take over. Their very grown-upness is the

block. 'Those who think they know,' he says, 'are the most dangerous people in the world. They're frozen, fixed, dead. A professional never creates anything new. He is too tied to his knowledge, he is too bound by his own successes.'

Most of us at the ashram ultimately seem to end up doing what we've been trained to do and what we do best, but not until it ceases to be the ego that's doing it. As long as 'I' am a writer, 'I' am a group leader, 'I' am a doctor or a lawyer, Bhagwan will have us/you/me washing dishes and digging ditches. Until finally we're able to drop the 'I', drop our knowledge, drop our attachment to our own expertise and become innocent again.

There are PhDs at the ashram who are washing floors, physicians who spend their days emptying garbage cans, film-makers who work as stonemasons and architects who work as handymen. We can't drop our expertise artificially. When the season is right it happens by itself, like dry leaves falling effortlessly from the tree. To pull them out before they're ready is to go against the natural flow of life, something Bhagwan would never encourage.

I remember telling him once, during my first trip to India, that I wasn't an intellectual any more: that I no longer read, I no longer wrote, I no longer tried to live my life through my mind. I was sure he would be as impressed with me as I was. He patted me on the head. 'Good, very good,' he laughed, and gave me a mind-boggling book by Ouspensky to read. He wasn't going to let me get away with the intellectual's pretension of non-intellectualism; he wasn't going to let me get away with anything.

The return to innocence, the route back home, is different for everyone who comes to Bhagwan. Bhagwan plays with each of us according to the circumstances, according to the need.

When B, a well-known leader of the growth movement, arrived in Poona and took sannyas, instead of suggesting that he join one of the scores of meditation and therapy groups that run continually at the ashram, as he usually does with new sannyasins, Bhagwan told B to run a day-long workshop on an experimental, trial basis.

B's workshop was a travesty. It was superficial, inane. Fun and games along the growth circuit. Bhagwan, however, seemed pleased with what he heard about it. He said that it had been good and that it should continue now on a daily basis. We were all amazed. He *had* to be kidding! We thought he must be up to something, but we didn't know what.

The daily workshops never took place. A few days before they were about to begin, B came down with dysentery and had to be hospitalized. From his hospital bed he wrote a letter to Bhagwan telling him that, since taking sannyas, nothing had changed for him. He still felt the same; he didn't feel any new growth happening within him.

'B's whole teaching is be-here-now,' Bhagwan said at the evening darshan that night, speaking to a friend of B's. 'But he doesn't know how to be-here-now. It's just a phrase, a philosophy. Because he understands it intellectually, he thinks he understands it. Then he tries to teach to others a truth that he himself is not living.'

'That's why I told him to run groups here. You tell him for me that this was a situation that I've created for him. If he comes here and continues to play the same games that he was playing before, how can he grow? If he continues to be the authority, if he continues to be the one who knows, where is there room for him to grow?'

'But I couldn't tell him that. I had to show him by allowing him to continue in his familiar pattern so he could see for himself the results of it. He is stuck in his own groove. First he has to see that. Only then can I ungroove him.'

If a group leader is functioning through his ego, he's not yet ready to lead groups at the ashram. First he has to learn to get out of the way, so that Bhagwan can work through him.

Veeresh was one of the founder-members of Phoenix House, a black Filipino ex-junkie from Harlem who, for several years, has been the director of the Therapeutic Institute in The Hague for the rehabilitation of drug addicts. He's something of a guru in his own right, a powerful charismatic personality. Since he took sannyas a few years ago, he has divided his time between Europe and India, leading groups at the ashram from time to time when he is there.

The first ashram group he ran was an exercise in frustration for him. Nothing he did worked; nothing seemed to click. His ex-wife and his lover were co-leading the group with him. Through them, he felt as though Bhagwan was constantly watching him, judging him. The participants in the group weren't just a random group of people; they were all orange-robed sannyasins. Everywhere he looked, through every pair of eyes, Veeresh felt Bhagwan watching him. He would tell someone something. They would answer by quoting Bhagwan. He felt as if his leadership was being undermined by Bhagwan's non-present presence.

'I had Sudha and Asha' — his ex-wife and lover — 'work with you',

Bhagwan told him at the darshan given at the conclusion of his group, 'because I wanted to shake your confidence in yourself so that you could begin to see how much you still have to grow. The group was bigger than the leader. They were all sannyasins; they were all a part of me, they were vehicles for me.

'Next group, you also become my vehicle and suddenly there will be a bridge between you and the others. When you go on working with groups, your ego is strengthened. That ego has to drop. Next time let Veeresh not be there. Just be my instrument. Not a leader really. At the most, a catalytic agent.'

Veeresh began to see how caught up he was in being a group leader; how no one could tell him anything, he knew everything. Bhagwan forced him to look at himself, to see what kind of game he was playing. Gradually his groups began to change. And he began to change.

Asha had been leading groups with Veeresh for several years in the West. Bhagwan told her at the darshan following the first group she coled at the ashram that her ego was too strong for her to be a good group leader, that she had too great a need to control others. 'It's not healthy for you to work with others,' he said. 'It causes damage to you and damage to others. It's a poison. You have to stop protecting your ego, safeguarding it. You are suffering, but you go on hiding from yourself that you are suffering. That's why you seem to listen, seem to understand, yet no understanding happens, no change happens.'

For a year, Asha stopped leading groups. She was left without a role to play. She went through a thousand changes, she confronted a thousand insecurities. When it was time for her to begin leading groups again, she was a different person. She could drop her ego at the door when the group began. She could function as an egoless vehicle.

At a lecture recently, Bhagwan answered the first question that Prageet (one of the ashram group leaders) had asked him in two years as a sannyasin. 'Why are people so violent?' he asked. 'Why do they have the need to hurt, to destroy?' His question was two typewritten pages of whys: why was everyone filled with so much ugliness? 'Group after group, I see people filled with the same unending violence. I'm so tired of it. Can't I stop leading groups and do something else? Work in the garden perhaps?'

Bhagwan answered: 'Prageet himself is a very violent person. That's why I have him leading groups. My groups aren't just for the participants; they're also for the leaders. Prageet himself is filled with all the hatred and violence and ugliness that he's tired of seeing in others.

Prageet work in my garden? Never! I love my flowers too much!’

I gasped. All around me, mouths dropped open in astonishment. A Zen master will strike his disciple with a stick, beat him, in order to awaken him. Bhagwan hits us with his words, at the lectures, at the evening darshans where we meet with him in small groups seeking personal guidance with our individual problems. He had told Krishna, who is an artist, that her art was just a waste of colour and canvas; that she used it as an escape. He had told Anand Prem that she was so filled with disgust for others that she had become a very disgusting person. He had told people that they were cowards, phony, ugly, destructive, but his words to Prageet were the harshest I had ever heard: ‘Prageet work in my garden? Never! I love my flowers too much!’ Oh God, poor Prageet. My heart went out to him. I sat trembling, feeling as if I had been hit too. None of us was safe. Bhagwan could strike out at any moment. Shattering us. Destroying egos left and right.

But the master hits out of love, out of compassion. The disciple, if he is wise, feels grateful. ‘Sometimes’, Bhagwan says, ‘I will be shattering. I have to be. I have to be merciless because that’s the only way to help you, that’s the only way to destroy you, annihilate you, and give you an opportunity to be reborn. *As you are* you have to disappear. *As you are* you have to die. Only then can the new arise out of you. The ego has to disappear for your real being to be. The mind has to disappear for God to be. The known has to disappear for the unknown to be welcomed.’

The master hits you when you’re capable of being hit. It’s a sign of growth. It means you’re ready for it. Bhagwan lures us to him, he seduces us, he makes his disciples feel that they’re special, that he has been waiting his whole life for them to come along – that now that they’re here, the *real* work can begin – and then he pushes them away, he cuts the apron strings, he makes them walk and stumble and fall and try to fly on their own. When it’s happening, when he is hitting you or pushing you away, it feels like a rejection. Later on, seeing the effectiveness of it, one bows down in thanks.

B bowed down in thanks. He signed up for the encounter group, he allowed his ego to be confronted, questioned, made suddenly insecure. He became a sannyasin, in fact, not just in name. Veeresh bowed down in thanks, Asha bowed down in thanks, Prageet bowed down in thanks.

At first Prageet had been so angry at Bhagwan that he was ready to leave. Then he looked at what Bhagwan had said, he looked at himself. ‘How could I leave?’ he said later. ‘That’s what I came here for: to have

someone tell me what I need to hear. Not what I want to hear, but what I have to hear.' Prageet didn't go out of his room for two days; he was afraid to face anyone. But he went through more in those two days than he had gone through in his whole previous life. He came out of it changed, and profoundly grateful. The master hits. The disciple learns through it, grows through it, is transformed.

Bhagwan goes on hitting me; he never stops. It's not what he says; it's what he doesn't say. It's not what he does; it's what he doesn't do. He ignores me. It's as though I'm not there, as though I don't exist. I can see that it's part of the weaning process, that I'm too attached to him, but it still hurts. I still want his attention, I still want to be treated like someone special, I still want him to acknowledge my existence. But the more I want it, the less he gives it to me.

I go to darshan. He looks right past me as though I'm not there. Or he looks at me as if he has never seen me before and says, 'Mmmm, anything?' as though he has forgotten my name.

I went to darshan a few months ago. I hadn't been in several months, but I was troubled; I wanted Bhagwan's advice. When my name was called I got up and sat down on the floor in front of him.

'Mmmm, Satya. You have something to ask?' he said. But then, before giving me a chance to ask anything, he started laughing. 'You know you have nothing to ask me. Go back to your seat' — and, still laughing, he motioned me away with a flick of his hand. Everyone was laughing. I felt like a naughty little girl who was trying to get away with something.

One comes to a master with a thousand questions. After a while the questions drop; the answers become self-evident. When Sariputra came to Buddha, like all intellectuals he wanted many questions answered. Buddha refused to answer them. He said, 'Remain with me in silence for one year. Then if you still have any questions to ask, ask them and I will answer you.' After one year, Sariputra's questions had dropped. There was nothing left to ask.

When I first came to India, I felt I had to see Bhagwan every day. Each day, each experience I was going through, brought up new questions. Then the questions grew fewer and fewer, the excuses for Bhagwan's attention lessened. But the desire for attention from him remained as strong as ever.

'You know you have nothing to ask!' Bhagwan was telling me that it was time I stopped asking questions, time I gave up relying on the

idea that at least if things got bad enough, if I couldn't handle something on my own, if I *really* needed him, he would be there.

Bhagwan was telling me: 'Enough! It's time to grow up finally.' Slowly, methodically, step by step, he has been taking away every crutch I've ever relied on. My children are no longer there to support me; my writing is no longer the lifeline it once was; Chaitanya exists for his own growth and not to support me, to comfort my ego, to protect my insecurities. Nothing's left; I'm on my own. There's no one or nothing in the universe to depend on any more. Not even Bhagwan.

'You're on your own, baby.' I'm pushed over a cliff. I fall.

My wings grow stronger. I fly. I soar.

Fear and exaltation. I can't do it. I *am* doing it.

The grown-ups aren't going to come along and take over. Instead, it seems, Bhagwan is determined to turn us all into the grown-ups I've been waiting for. Whether we like it or not; with our help or without it. Despite our obstinacy, despite our resistance, despite our incapability. One way or the other, he'll do it. He'll turn us all into grown-ups, into gods and goddesses.

'I can't tell you what enlightenment is,' he says, 'but I can lead you to it. I can take you by the hand, I can lead you to the door and push you through. If you had asked me what enlightenment is before I became enlightened, I could have given you a dozen definitions. Now I have nothing to say about it. One can't talk about it; one can only *be* it. I can't tell you what it is; I can only give it to you.'

And the funny thing is, he probably will.

My family's response

My family, of course, has never quite forgiven me for taking sannyas. And especially for having moved to India. At least my parents haven't. For my children the transition seems to have been easier. They would like me to be living with them, or at least living in the States, but they seem to be able to understand why I'm not. Whatever unhappiness it gives them they seem to accept too, and grow in their own ways through it. 'Life is a school,' Billy says nonchalantly, as if it's the kind of perception every eleven-year-old child has. 'I guess being without Mommy is one of the lessons I have to learn.'

I never actually decided to leave my children with their father. One day while I was meditating — it was several weeks before I planned to go to India for the first time; I had been a sannyasin for several months — suddenly out of nowhere the decision was just there. One minute it was unthought of; the next minute it was decided. Later on came the hesitations, the uncertainties, the resistance. The guilt. The decision seemed to come from somewhere outside me, or from somewhere deep within; somewhere beyond mind, beyond conditioning, beyond desires. Then the mind came back in to torture me with its opinions. My children seem to have lost most of their attachment to me over the years, without losing any of their love. While from my side, I seem to be as attached to them as ever.

My ex-husband was delighted at the idea of the children moving in with him permanently. He had been telling me for years that he wanted custody of them anyway, whenever he didn't approve of the colour of my lover's skin, or the nature of my poetry, or the ideology of my politics. We had always lived in two entirely different worlds, neither of us respecting that of the other.

The children had learned to live in both worlds with equal ease. In their father's world they were model children, typical upper-middle-class citizens: suppressed and polite and interested in sports and current events. In my world they were sensitive, exuberant, free. They cursed,

they got angry when they were angry, they came out with mystical insights that astounded me. I had always wanted to save them from their father's world, and he had always wanted to save them from mine. It had been a subtle battle of choices all along.

To suddenly, willingly, hand the children over to their father's influence was hard. But it seemed inevitable. I was about to leave for India for the first time. Perhaps I would be going often. Perhaps I would want to stay, or need to stay, for longer than I had intended. I rationalized my abdication, if it was an abdication. I comforted myself with the influence I had already had on them. Hopefully the fact that I was making alternative choices for my life would give them an option, a way out, that I hadn't known existed when I was growing up. I had only seen one sort of world. They already knew that many worlds existed. How could I wish for them as I did, most of all, happiness, freedom and continual growth if I didn't allow myself to have it? How can you share with others what you yourself don't have?

And after all, I told myself, I might have died. They might have been forced to live with their father. He loved them, he was a good man; they loved him. He had been a good father to me when I had needed a father; he would be a good father to them. Rationalizations, justifications. I couldn't make their rebellion for them anyway, it was bound to fail. They would grow up with me, and become stockbrokers like their father. It happens all the time, over and over again.

So they moved in with their father. They would grow up as I had grown up, and as most American children grow up. Loved and suppressed and overconditioned. Hopefully they would fight against it some day. I had. Maybe they wouldn't: their father hadn't. But it was their choice. I couldn't make their choices for them anyway; it was a subtle violence to try to.

Non-attachment doesn't come from not having anything to be attached to. It comes from being attached, and feeling the pain of attachment.

A few years ago I was visiting my children at their apartment. I was about to leave. Patti (who was about eleven at the time) and a friend of hers went down in the elevator with me. Liza, the friend, was hugging me. 'I love your mother so much that I hate it when she leaves,' Liza said to Patti. 'How can you *stand* it?'

Patti just laughed. 'When you love someone', she said, 'they never leave. They're always with you. No matter where they are in the world. Right, Mom?' She pounced on me exuberantly with puppy kisses. 'Plus

you appreciate each other more when you're together,' she added. 'Don't you wish you had my mommy for your mommy instead of your mother? You always *tell* me you do!'

Words are just words, and no doubt there was a certain defensiveness in Patti's remarks, but she hadn't received the idea from me. Somehow, through the circumstances of her life and through her acceptance of the way things were, she had reached a state of non-attachment, non-possessiveness, non-jealousy, in relation to me. She could allow me to live my own life, to have my freedom. What greater love can one human being have for another? She had come to a point that people spend years in monasteries trying to attain. She had learnt a lesson that most people never learn and that they waste their lives in needless suffering for not knowing. You can't hold on to anything. Nothing is yours. Butterflies are free.

I take my freedom so that my children can be free. What more can I offer them?

But for me to give up my attachment to them has been a lot harder. Time after time in meditation the same thing keeps coming up. I sit on the floor crosslegged, my arms folded across my chest, my right hand caressing my left upper arm. I rock back and forth crying, 'I want my baby back, I want my baby back.' The pain is incredible. I relive scores of past-life experiences, all connected with this same feeling of loss: my children dead, dying, killed; taken away from me in one way or another. A loss that's irretrievable, a pain that's unending. In this lifetime, no one has killed my children, no one has taken them away from me. I've done it myself; the choice was mine. The pain is no less real because of it.

I watch my children growing more and more conditioned by the narrowing affluence of the world in which they live. I watch them grow into strangers, the gulf between us becoming wider as the years pass. I have rejected their world. They're not even interested in seeing mine.

Nancy, the oldest, is having the kind of adolescent troubles where she wishes she had a mother around. She writes to me that she has to talk to me, will I please come home right away? I call her on the phone and invite her to come to India to see me. Instead, she goes to Florida on her school vacation to visit her grandmother. Opting for the known, afraid of the unknown.

Five years ago, when Billy was six, the words from his mouth sounded as if they came from Buddha. He had a wisdom beyond his

years, and beyond my knowings. The things he took as a matter of course were things I was just beginning to learn about through meditation, and through Bhagwan's books. I would read something Bhagwan had said that sounded vaguely familiar. Where had I heard it before? Then I would remember that Billy had said something almost identical to it a while before. He was my first guru, a wise, ancient one despite his years.

Now when I see him he wants to talk to me about baseball. 'I used to believe in the things you believe in,' he tells me, 'but I grew up.' He laughs, teasing me, but is impatient behind the teasing. 'I think it's time you grew up one of these days too, Mom, huh?' Buddha on the baseball field. Billy becomes profoundly philosophical only to please me, a ruse to stay up late at night when I'm around. 'Come on, Mom, let's talk. We didn't get a chance to talk *all day!*'

A few months ago I went to darshan to talk to Bhagwan about my continued attachment to my children and the pain it was still causing me. I felt that I had failed them. Not because I had left them but because I had never brought them to India to meet Bhagwan. They had never wanted to come, and I had never felt I had the right to insist on it. But so many children from all over the world were coming with their parents now to Poona. They were growing, blooming, flowering in Bhagwan's presence. They were losing their tightness and becoming beautiful, spontaneous beings. I wanted to give that to my children. I hadn't been able to.

Although I hadn't talked to Bhagwan about my children in over two years, at the darshan that night he spoke to me about them as though we had just been discussing them the day before. He remembered everything about them, remembered letters they had written to him when I first came to India, remembered dreams they had had about him. 'Why are you worrying about them?' he asked. 'Everything is perfect with them. Everything is happening as it should. They're not your responsibility any more, I told you that before. They're my responsibility now; I'm taking care of them. They'll come here, don't worry. When the time is right, when they're ready to come. Nothing can happen until the time is right.

'There is no need for you to worry. It's my responsibility now.'

I left the darshan feeling as though a weight had dropped from me. Bhagwan had told me the same thing before, but I hadn't been able to trust him enough to believe it. I suppose trust grows. I trusted him enough now. It would happen when it happened. Everything in its

own time, in its own way. Nancy and I seem to be growing closer through our letters than we've ever been before. Billy gives out vague hints of wanting to come someday. Patti says maybe — if she wasn't so busy. Slowly it's happening. Sooner or later they're bound to come.

Even my parents will come sooner or later. They'll come for a visit, because they want to see me, but something is bound to happen to them through it. Bhagwan is such a powerful presence that it can't help but happen. I don't seem to be able to explain to them what he is like, and why my life has changed so much because of him, but if they come to visit, they'll see whatever it is they're capable of seeing, they'll gain from Bhagwan whatever it is they're capable of gaining.

My mother keeps writing to me that she knows I could make a go of it if I would just come back to America and start out fresh. 'It's not too late for you,' she writes. 'I know you could do it. You could get a good job. We would help you. Come back, honey' — as though my taking sannyas and living in India is symptomatic of a failure to live life the way it should be lived.

I suppose it looks that way to most people. My sister tells me that I've dumped my responsibilities on everyone else so I can sit somewhere and contemplate my navel. 'Don't you think I would like *my* freedom too?' she complained to me the last time we were together.

'Then take it,' I told her. 'There's nothing to stop you from—'

'Nothing to *stop* me?' she shrieked. 'I've got three kids to support, I work hard — you think my life's easy? And Mother and Daddy are so busy disapproving of me all the time while they treat you like the prodigal daughter returned home. I'm sick and tired of it. You think the whole world can just cop out like you have? And you sit there looking so goddam smug as if you've got all the answers. Don't tell *me* I can make your choices. Someone's got to. . . .' etc.

She sat across the table yelling at me, her face animated and distorted, her New York sophisticated/pretty features made ugly by tensions that in the last few years never seem to leave her face. While she was yelling, I felt myself becoming more and more calm and meditative. I was getting stoned on her vehemence. Her anger was pouring into me. I was getting high from it as I get high from the subways, as I get high from big crowds. The more angry she became, the more meditative I felt. I could see how it must look like smugness to her. I wasn't reacting, I couldn't take what she was saying seriously.

I know she is where she is because she chooses to be there. I was there once too. I know she doesn't *have* to be there. I have nothing in

the world and I'm happy. She has the life she has always wanted for herself, and she is miserable. It must be an affront to her. How could it not be?

If I knew how to play the flute I would play it for my sister, mesmerizing her with the music. I would walk down the street and she would follow. I would lead her on board a plane, I would lead her to Poona, I would lead her to Bhagwan's feet. When she got there, she would laugh. She would thank me for having tricked her into coming. She would learn to laugh again; she would rediscover joy.

But I didn't know the magic. Everyone is living a melodrama of their own choosing, but how to tell them that? I wouldn't have thanked anyone who had tried to tell it to me.

The most I can hope for anyone is that they begin the journey to where they can be. With Bhagwan or elsewhere, it's immaterial really. Just to begin it; somehow, somewhere. I hope it for my sister and my brothers, for my parents and my children.

Death approaches, and we begin to ask what life is all about. While it's there, we find a million excuses not to live it. Parents sacrifice for their children. The children grow up and make the same sacrifices for their own children. No one ever says, 'Stop! When will there be time to live, time to love, time to enjoy?'

'Life is the only religion,' Bhagwan says. 'The temple that enshrines God as life is the only true temple. God is life, and there is no other God. Live it, taste it, eat it. That's what Jesus means when he says, "Drink me."'

'I am a drunkard, intoxicated with life. Live life beautifully, dancing and singing. Then you can live death beautifully. Then death is not something opposite to life. It's the peak, the crescendo. You wait for it eagerly. And one day, death comes dancing.'

The sannyasin way of death

This morning, instead of going to the morning lecture, I sat on the roof and tried to write objectively about not being with my children, as if it were something I took for granted, as if I were removed from it, unidentified. Then, this afternoon, apropos of practically nothing — I read some lines in a mystery: 'Your father loved you to the point of death, Harriet' — suddenly, unexpectedly, I'm crying and feeling again that painful, familiar kind of mother-love where I would die for my children.

I would do it without question; there's no doubt about it. But to live so that they can live seems to be so much harder.

'You can't live my life for me, nor can you die my death for me,' Bhagwan says. 'You can die in my place — that's a different thing. It's *your* death, chosen by you. But you can't die for me. Only I can live my life. Only I can die my death.'

I want to save my children from suffering, even though I know it's impossible. I sometimes think I left them so I wouldn't have to watch their pains. Pain long-distance doesn't seem so devastating. I remember what it was like growing up: a constant suffering. I don't want to see it happening to them. I shut my eyes, I bury my head in the sand. Being a mother is hell; the love is excruciating.

There's a meditation technique where you watch the bodies of the people you love die. You go through their death, you go through the bereavement, you give up your attachment to them. Everything that lives is bound to die. The beginning is the end, your first step is your last, your birth is your death.

I give birth to my children one by one. I watch them grow old and die. I give birth to them again, I watch them die again. I don't get used to it. The attachment doesn't drop.

Krishna Mohammed was in my room the other day, and he mentioned the same technique: meditating deeply on his children's death. If one can live through the death of one's children, one can live through anything. It's not death itself that's so bad; it's the fear of it. The

technique worked for Krishna as it hadn't for me. He felt cleansed by it. Death — his own or that of someone he loved — no longer held any fear for him.

When my father turned seventy two months ago, I wrote him a letter about death. I meant it so lovingly; I thought it was the nicest gift I could give him. My parents haven't written back yet; I think they're angry. Bhagwan says that there are two kinds of diseased attitude towards death. The first is a morbid preoccupation with it, and the second is a determined denial of it. In America, most people seem to suffer from the second attitude. People don't want to think about death, they don't want to acknowledge the inevitability of it. They refuse to look it in the face, they're somehow ashamed of it. A child who has had a death in the family is embarrassed by it. It's as if he is marked by the sign of Cain, as if he wears death on his forehead.

We hide death from our children, or tell them fairytales to explain it away. We hide it from ourselves. My father is seventy, he has never been a well man, but when I mention death to him, and the need to find something within himself that won't die with his death, I'm bringing up something that he would rather ignore. It *can't* happen to him. He'll push it away until it's right on top of him and it's too late for him to use his death, and to learn to move into it consciously.

We live in fear of death, we don't welcome it. It's our panic in the face of death that makes death so ugly.

'In a way nobody ever dies,' Bhagwan says, 'and in another way every moment we are dying. Unless you accept death, you remain half. When both life and death are accepted you gain balance; you become tranquil, whole. Wholeness is holiness. Life is beautiful and death is beautiful. Life has its own blessings and death has its own blessings. Remember, all that God gives you has to be taken in deep gratitude, even death. Only then do you become religious.'

'Death is one of the holiest of the holies. People have completely forgotten how to live and they have completely forgotten how to die. They have been taught that death is the enemy of life, the end of life, so they are scared and cannot relax, cannot be in a let-go. Their life is ugly and their death is ugly.'

'I would like you to not only be able to teach others how to live; I would like you to be able to teach them how to die also. Death should be welcomed; it is one of the greatest events in life. Birth has already happened, love happens to very few, but death happens to all. You can't avoid it; it's the only certainty there is. Accept it, rejoice in it, delight in it.'

Last year Vipassana, a Dutch girl in her early twenties who was living at the ashram, a vibrant, alive, bubbling girl, died suddenly of a brain tumour. Death happened the way it should happen, the way it hardly ever does. It was a beautiful death: for Vipassana and for those of us who were with her.

Bhagwan used Vipassana's death as a technique to help us to learn to face the fact of death and to welcome it. We each went through our various death trips: our fears, our guilts, our feelings of impotence, frustration, rage, abandonment.

Sat Prem, who had been Vipassana's lover at one time, went to darshan the evening after Vipassana had been taken into the hospital. He is not a man who cries easily, but he sat there crying, wanting to do something for Vipassana but knowing that there was nothing he could do. The day before, Vipassana had been fine. Suddenly she was in the hospital and it was obvious that she was dying. Sat Prem spoke to Bhagwan about his feeling of helplessness.

'It's good to feel helpless,' Bhagwan told him. 'Helplessness will help your ego to drop. Neither birth nor death are in our hands; nothing is in our hands. Once you realize this, prayer arises. Prayer is a deep cry of helplessness; it makes a person religious.

'Doctors, medicine, give us an illusion that we're in control, but nothing is in control. Even the doctor is helpless. Inside, he is trembling. Science has helped the ego so that man feels less helpless, but it's just a pretension. Humanity is helpless; death is inevitable. It's not a question of whether someone survives or not, because how long can anyone survive? One day, one year, ten years; it doesn't matter. We are fighting a losing battle. Remember, not only Vipassana is on her deathbed; everyone is on his or her own deathbed. All beds are deathbeds because after birth only one thing is certain: death. You should feel sorry for yourself. You are in the same boat as Vipassana. Death will knock on your door any day.

'Go and sit beside Vipassana and pray. Use this opportunity for prayer. I don't mean to pray for something; prayer is an end in itself. It's a deep cry of humbleness, of helplessness. Sit by Vipassana's side and feel your helplessness. Something will start arising; you'll become like a small child. When a child feels helpless, unhappy, he begins to cry. That cry is tremendously meaningful. I'm not saying to use some Christian prayer: to verbalize or to say something. If you can simply cry in helplessness, if tears come, you'll be cleansed. You'll come out of it younger, fresher. It's not that Vipassana will be helped by your

prayer; *you* are going to be helped. Just by praying you'll feel purified. You'll be able to accept more, you'll become more open. Even death becomes okay.

'You'll be transformed. You'll feel a new calmness that has never been there before. It always happens near death. Whenever you love someone and he is dying, a great opportunity opens for you. If you are depressed, it will be a sheer wastage. Death should not be wasted that way. Either one can become depressed, or the moment can send you on a great journey for truth.

'Vipassana has changed tremendously in the few months she has been here. She has used this life. If she lives, good. If she dies, I will not feel unhappy for her. She has earned a certain integration and will be able to use it in her next life. She has grown much; I am happy. I can say goodbye to her with happiness. There is no repentance that she has missed something.'

At the lecture the next morning, Bhagwan told us that we should all go and sit by Vipassana's side and experience her death with her. 'Through her death,' he said, 'try to learn how to die. In her death, allow your own death to happen. Make it an opportunity to move into death and see what death is so you have the taste of it, the flavour of it. Sit with Vipassana, meditate with her. Create a loving, happy atmosphere around her. No one should die surrounded by sadness or their next life will begin under the shadow of that sadness.'

For days the hospital halls and corridors were filled with a steady stream of orange people, many of whom hadn't known Vipassana before. But it didn't matter. Everyone came to share: to give and to receive.

Vipassana was a musician, a singer and a dancer, she loved music, so people played their flutes and guitars for her. Taped music was played, and tapes of Bhagwan's lectures. Sannyasin nurses took care of her and other sannyasins were in the room continually, sitting with her and with Viyogi, her brother, who rarely left her side. She wore a mala around her neck. Lying on her chest was the small box Bhagwan had given to her. Nearby was his picture. The intensive-care unit she was in was turned into a place of worship, a temple.

Vipassana remained unconscious. Unconscious, at least, according to medical definitions. But there was a deep level of communication happening constantly between her and those who sat with her. We talked to her silently. She responded in her own way. A tear. A faint, hardly perceptible squeezing of the hand that held hers.

Her body lay as inert as a rag doll. She looked like an abandoned puppet that only needed the right person to come along and breathe life into her. Her head was bandaged. Tubes were in her veins, her nose, her mouth. But it wasn't depressing. Her body was dying, but her soul was as alive as ever. One could feel it like a potent presence filling the room. We stood around her deathbed for hours in deep meditation that happened spontaneously.

I would sit holding Vipassana's hand, saying to her over and over in my head, 'It's time to drop the body, love. Drop it. It's time to leave.' Her body wasn't good any more — what did she need it for? It was so clear that she wasn't the body. It was time to shed it like a piece of torn cloth and clothe herself in something new.

Several days after she had been admitted to the hospital, Viyogi was playing a taped discourse by Bhagwan for her on Jesus' crucifixion. 'A few minutes before the discourse was about to end,' Viyogi said, 'Vipassana's breath seemed to waver. I was holding her hand in my two hands. Suddenly the heart monitor seemed to change rhythm and there was a sudden resurgence of life. When Bhagwan's voice said, "Enough for today," the tape recorder clicked off and Vipassana stopped breathing. Her face was absolutely relaxed, blissful. An incredible overwhelming energy passed from her body into mine. I was filled with energy. It was like a total orgasm.'

Chaitanya and I were at the hospital at the time; Viyogi came out of the room — crying, laughing. He hugged Chaitanya; he was vibrating with energy. We all suddenly felt ecstatic. Vipassana had 'dropped the body', but it wasn't just an Indian expression for death; we could feel the reality of it. Her soul had left her body; she was free. We rejoiced in her freedom. No matter how much we tried to be sad — we had all been conditioned all our lives to feel that death was something tragic — it was impossible. Vipassana's energy was so alive. We could feel it all around us: inside us, in the trees, in the air.

Darshan was cancelled that night, and Bhagwan gave a special evening discourse. He told us that Vipassana had died as he had wanted her to die: in a deep let-go. 'I have been in contact with her continuously,' he said. 'She was relaxing. She has gone to death without any struggle, without any fight. Once you die that way, only one more birth is possible. So be happy for Vipassana; she has attained something very beautiful. You should feel jealous. Her death has been a blessing to her. Few people die that way today.'

After the lecture, we took Vipassana's body to the burning ground.

Burning the body, Bhagwan had said during the lecture that evening, is helpful for the soul that is departing. The soul can see the body being burnt to ashes; it helps it to be detached. 'When a person dies, it takes a few hours for him to recognize that he's dead. If the body is buried underground, it may take many days for the person to recognize that he is dead. With the burning of the body, the realization is immediate. It will be good for Vipassana to see her body being burnt: dust unto dust. And it will be good for you also, because the same thing is going to happen to your body.'

'Dance around the funeral pyre until Vipassana's body is reduced to ashes. Go on dancing ecstatically. Let it be a great meditation. Give Vipassana a beautiful send-off; she is going on a long journey. Be dancing, happy, singing. This is the way to give a send-off to a friend. If you are happy, you help the other person to move easily into the unknown. If you are sad, your sadness becomes a heaviness on the other person; it becomes like a rock around their neck. Be happy! Let the other person feel that she is loved, accepted; that she is leaving a happiness behind her, a gladness behind her.'

'Let there be dancing, celebration, festivity. Vipassana was a musician and a dancer — she'll love it! Let your whole energy become a dance. Give Vipassana a send-off as if she were alive. She *is* alive. If you really dance, you will feel her presence.'

'So go happily. If tears come, let them come. Tears are not necessarily of sadness; they are just symbolic of something overflowing. If you want to cry, cry; but let it have the quality of a song. If tears come, let them flow; but let them have the quality of a dance.'

'Now, before you go, we will have ten minutes of silence. . . .'

Hundreds of sannyasins danced and sang their way to the funeral grounds. We danced and sang around the funeral pyre; we spent ourselves emotionally. Bhagwan had said that he didn't want there to be any sad faces around. There weren't. It was a party, a *bon voyage!* — the most fitting, appropriate farewell I had ever seen. A total offering of oneself, an exchange of energy, a last act of love that left nothing behind to cause regret. After many hours, the fire died down. Nothing was left but the stars and the moon and the sound of our own voices. There was no more death, only life.

How different it was from the way we practise death in the West. Vipassana had died surrounded by loving, meditating friends and family, who helped her to die rather than creating an atmosphere of fear around her. When someone is dying, you can dance and sing; you

can share yourself with them; you can give them your love and gratitude. If you can give them that much — for the moment, the whole of you, the totality of your being — guilt vanishes, sorrow vanishes. You haven't been totally impotent in the face of death. There was something you could do, something you could offer. Your love, your joy, your gratitude.

Vipassana was young when she died, but what did it matter? It's not how long you live; it's how you live. It's not when your death comes; it's how you die. Her death was beautiful. She was able to use it. She grew more through her death than most people do throughout their lives.

In the West we treat death like an enemy, not like a friend. Because we're afraid of the unknown, we're afraid of death. We cling to the old, the familiar. We move into new situations with our old protections. We interpret the new in terms of the old, the unknown in terms of the known. Everywhere, we cling to our security-blankets: our fixed attitudes, our fixed personalities.

'Life is insecure, uncertain,' Bhagwan says. 'It is the very nature of life. Only death is secure. To be dead is the only way to be secure. A dead man is like a rock. Nothing more can happen to him. He's life-proof — life can't come to him. Death is the only certainty there is; life itself is uncertain. If you want to be more alive you have to live in uncertainty, you have to move into the unknown. What your life is like is what your death will be like. If you live your life without fear, welcoming the unknown, your death will be without fear. You'll embrace death like a bridegroom embracing his beloved.

'Death is the greatest adventure there is. Live your life totally, consciously, ecstatically, so that you can die a conscious, ecstatic, total death.'

If I could give that to my children — Bhagwan's words and the ability to feel them within themselves — if I could give them the promise of life and the courage to live it without fear, it would be enough. But you can't give anything to anyone until they're ready to take it. You can only leave an offering by the door and wait until the people inside get hungry enough to try it. Eventually it's bound to happen, however many lifetimes it takes.

I hear the stomachs of people all over the world rumbling. People grow hungrier, more starved for meaning. Frustration grows, madness increases, alienation has become the rule rather than the exception. People will have to turn to religion, to meditation finally; there's nowhere left to go.

'I know you're thirsty,' Bhagwan says, 'and I have that which can quench your thirst. But you're not ready yet. First you'll have to produce your cup. Only then can I pour that which I have into you to fill you.'

I'm moulding my cup, or trying to; moulding it into a receptacle to hold the bliss that existence offers. I'm trying to empty myself so I can be filled. In their own ways, my children are doing the same thing: moulding their own cups, emptying themselves, making their own mistakes and miscalculations as they do it. Everyone in the world is doing the same: some consciously, some blindly. The more conscious we are about emptying ourselves so that we can be filled, the sooner it will happen, that's all.

We have nothing to lose but our heads.

Bhagwan's ashram: the marketplace and the temple

I'm sitting in the office of one of the largest printing presses in Bombay right now, waiting six, eight, ten hours for work on one of Bhagwan's books to be completed and shown to me for approval, work that in the West would take minutes to complete. The place is a caricature of Indian incompetence. I feel myself growing impatient. I try to write, I try to draw. Neither works: I'm bored. I have nothing to read but probably wouldn't read it if I had. I sit with my boredom and watch it. I watch my impatience. I feel the mechanism of it in my body, I feel what it does to my body electricity, my body energy.

If I close my eyes, I'm *not* bored. Suddenly I become centred. Everything stops. Tension disappears, impatience disappears, wanting the situation to be different disappears. Everything is perfect as it is. It's a perfect opportunity for me to sit silently and meditate. There's nothing in the world I have to do right now, nothing in the world I *can* do. Just sit, wait, be. Enjoy my being.

I close my eyes and the beauty of it's there. Each moment is perfect unto itself. But the minute I open my eyes again, I'm right back with the boredom and impatience. I can escape from it now by moving to my centre, something I couldn't have done a few years ago, but in a way I think that that's as much of an escape as reading, or writing, or going to the movies, or gossiping, or doing any of the thousand and one things that people do to escape from being where they are. I can't sit and wait and just be happy sitting and waiting for hour after hour. I have to close my eyes, I have to move inside.

Bhagwan's inside *is* his outside, there's no difference between the two, but for me the difference is so great that it's as though I'm two separate beings: an inner being that's constantly at peace and an outer being that's as much in conflict with the existence, with what is, as it ever was.

Sometimes, like a gift, my inner becomes my outer. Usually it's when I'm talking to people about Bhagwan, or when I'm giving them

advice about their problems. I'm talking, but it's not as though 'I'm' talking. I feel quiet inside, empty. There are no words, no thoughts. It feels as though something is coming through me, a pure knowing that has nothing to do with 'me'. My ego is held suspended somewhere; I'm suddenly functioning without it. There's a calmness, a centredness.

But mostly the feeling only comes to me when I'm not doing anything: when I'm looking at the stars, when I'm listening to music, when I close my eyes and shut out the jarring intrusions of the world. I sometimes think that I could exist in a state of constant meditation if I lived in a monastery, where confrontations with life were kept to a minimum. I could spend my life (or so I fantasize) in constant bliss if I could live by myself in the woods. I would like to spend the rest of my years sitting under a tree meditating. But it would be too easy, it would just be another escape.

Bhagwan makes us live in the world. His ashram is a duplication of the world, not a comforting substitute for it. It's not enough to meditate, to have a beautiful world inside you where you can escape and feel good. A master teaches you to live life, not to run away from it.

Bhagwan's ashram is a microcosm of the world. An experimental lab in which one is forced to confront oneself. Everything is reduced to such simplicity that it's impossible not to see the absurdity of the ego and all the ego's games. Who gets to sit in the first two rows during Bhagwan's morning discourse, who lives in the same house as Bhagwan, to whom has Bhagwan given the nicest present, to whom has he just given a special smile or whom has he just talked about in the lecture? The ego has an investment in all of this. Hope is there, anger, jealousy, greed, pride, self-importance, self-denigration, the desire for power, for privilege, for acknowledgment.

One is promoted to one of the most prestigious jobs in the ashram: washing the floor outside Bhagwan's room or scrubbing the pots and pans that were used to prepare his lunch. The ego is just as fulfilled by this as the junior executive's is when he's promoted to the vice-presidency of IBM. There's no essential difference; the same human dynamics are involved. But if you become vice-president of a big company you can delude yourself into feeling that it's important, you can rationalize a hundred reasons why it *matters*. In a comparable ashram situation it's hard to take it seriously. You can watch your ego investment so much more easily, because the framework in which the drama is being acted out is so simplistic.

The ego feels gratified, enhanced, but you're able to watch it, witness it. And in that witnessing, disidentification happens. The sense of pride, privilege and self-importance drops. One is humbled by the absurdity of it. Just gratitude remains: what has been given is a gift. Not that you deserved it, not that you're better than someone else who hasn't been so honoured; but in your very unworthiness the gift has been given. It's not 'I', 'I', 'I'. It's 'Thank you. Thank you.' A vast difference.

One can see jealousy so clearly, so precisely, because the reason for the jealousy is so ridiculous. Someone else is given a seat in the first row for the morning lecture. Why him or her? Why not me? It's no different from any other kind of jealousy. Yet a moment later one can see how petty it is — and through the seeing, how petty all jealousies are. One feels the jealousy arise inside. One watches it, one laughs — it drops.

Anger, resentment: someone else gets a bigger portion of food than you do at lunch. One watches the ego get hurt in a thousand different ways. The ashram is like the world of a Beckett play. The simplest act is infused with the most profound meaning. Everything is a shorthand, simplified version of the world's complexities.

'There's no distinction between the secular and the sacred,' Bhagwan says. 'This world and the other world are one, heaven and earth are one. Religions have created a gap between the two. That gap must be dissolved. The world is as holy as any monastery; the world is a temple. God is as present in the marketplace as he is inside the temple.'

The majority of Bhagwan's sannyasins alternate their time between the ashram and living in the world. But even those of us who live at the ashram permanently remain in the world; Bhagwan doesn't allow us to escape from it. The ashram is an intensified world, an exaggerated world.

The world is our school. The complications that life creates for us are the situations through which we'll grow. Sitting in the office, now, of what has got to be the worst printing press in the world, I can feel myself growing more patient as I watch my impatience. I suddenly begin to see the comic aspects of the situation — not later, when it's easy to see how absurd a frustrating situation has been, but now, while it's happening. I begin to enjoy the whole thing: the impatience, the boredom, the frustration, the incompetence of the people working here.

When I surrender to it, it's fine. It's only when I decide that, after all, the work has to get done and try to make it happen that I find myself getting impatient again. I decide to be insistent with the people I

have to deal with, I decide that maybe anger would work, but then I lose myself in it and begin to *feel* righteously indignant, begin to *feel* angry. I forget to play a part. I become it.

There's a fine line between doing and non-doing. Meditation is non-doing, but it doesn't mean that you're not *doing* anything, it means that *you're* not doing anything. Bhagwan doesn't do anything, but a million things happen around him. He sits in his room and reads for most of the day, coming out only for an hour and a half in the morning to lecture and another hour and a half in the evening for darshans. Yet in the last four to five years he has attracted scores of thousands of disciples from all over the world, his ashram in Poona has evolved into the largest growth centre in the world, over fifty books by him are published every year in Hindi and English and translated into numerous other languages. He doesn't do anything; it happens.

Non-doing means that you let things happen through you, but you're not the doer. It's not that 'I' am taking care of the publication of one of Bhagwan's books. The publication of one of Bhagwan's books is being taken care of (in the present case, not too successfully), and a certain aspect of the work is happening through me. If I can see that 'I'm' not doing it, then there's no ego attachment to it. If the work I do turns out well, it turns out well. It has nothing to do with me. If it's a failure, it's a failure. It has nothing to do with *me*. Neither credit nor blame, neither pride nor guilt.

Bhagwan teaches meditation through action, non-doing through doing, effortlessness through effort. 'It's this very material world', he says, 'that leads to bliss.'

Work as a Zen koan

Gurdjieff was a master at creating situations. Bhagwan is one too. He tells you to do something and then makes it impossible for you to do it. It's his own unique version, I sometimes think, of the koan that Zen masters traditionally give to their disciples. The Zen master says, 'What's the sound of one hand clapping? Meditate on it. Don't come back until you know it.'

There is no sound. Every answer the disciple gives is wrong. But if the disciple is sophisticated, as we all are these days, and he just says, 'There's no sound; there's nothing, it's silence,' his failure has been the greatest failure of all. To meditate on the absurdity, but to meditate on it as though it's not absurd, to take it absolutely seriously, is the only way the technique has any validity. The mind thinks. It searches for a reason where there is no reason. Through that unending search, an explosion can happen in which the mind vanishes. There's no question, there's no answer. There's no disciple, there's no master. One comes to what Abraham Maslow describes as an 'aha!' experience. A peak experience, a satori. One may laugh, one may weep, one may sit silently, illuminated by one's own knowing.

Bhagwan doesn't give us koans to meditate on; he gives us koans to live. He does that continually with the work around the ashram. While doing one thing, something else happens. Nothing is what it seems to be.

For example, two people may be put in charge of the same thing. Or one may be given a job to do and then prevented in every possible way from doing it. Bhagwan has made it clear to all of us that the decisions made by Laxmi (his secretary) are his decisions, that when she speaks it's him speaking; but as often as not, when it comes to the work around the ashram, Laxmi seems to say the exact opposite of what Bhagwan has just suggested. How can one follow two contradictory sets of instructions? It's impossible. But that's where the growth lies. It's a Zen koan to live with, to work through.

But when situations like this come up for me, when I'm placed in

some neither/nor, damned-if-you-do/damned-if-you-don't situation that involves a confrontation with Laxmi or someone else, time and time again, rather than confronting the situation and confronting Laxmi or whoever else is involved, my tendency has been to give up, telling myself that I'm 'surrendering' to the situation, to what is, that I'm not doing what Bhagwan has suggested I do because this or that won't let me. As though that's really an excuse. Resigning, and calling it surrender, acceptance. Missing the whole point.

Surrendering to a situation, surrendering to existence, doesn't mean you just stop functioning. It may mean surrendering to the conflicts that arise, surrendering to your own power-trip, your own resentments, your own ugliness. Surrender doesn't mean avoidance. Sometimes it may mean confrontation. Surrendering to what's inside of you so you can get rid of it.

A few years ago, shortly after Chaitanya and I moved to the ashram, I went to Bhagwan to complain to him about Laxmi. I told him that she wasn't letting me and the others do our work, that she was creating unnecessary complications and confusing every issue. He was stern with me. 'If you have any problems with Laxmi', he said, 'then take them to Laxmi. Why bother me with them? If you're angry at Laxmi, be angry at her. Don't tell me about it.' Although I didn't realize it at the time, Laxmi was operating, as she has always done, on direct instructions from Bhagwan. When she complicates things it's intentional. When she scolds or teases it's intentional. She is Bhagwan's instrument, brewing trouble for everyone she can and creating endless ego-conflicts.

Bhagwan says yes to everything. Laxmi sometimes seems to throw a monkey-wrench into every yes. But it's Bhagwan's wrench she is throwing. If you can surrender to the tensions and conflicts that Laxmi is creating – if you can allow yourself to express it, explode with it – suddenly you'll be able to see all the ugliness inside you that the situation is revealing. Only when it's there, blatantly obvious in front of you, in neon lights – the poison of your own anger and violence pouring out of you – can it be dropped. Authentically, once and for all, with nothing left behind. Surrendering on the surface isn't good enough. It's too cheap. The anger and resentment remain inside, poisoning you.

Sheela and Arup, Laxmi's two assistants, are in constant conflict with one another. Laxmi, like the skilled catalyst that she is, plays games with them: first favouring one, then the other; using each of them to press the buttons of the other. Finally the jealousy and hostility

builds to a peak. Sheela explodes. At the moment of explosion she realizes the absurdity of her outrage. The realization changes her. An authentic surrender happens.

Gandha, who's Swedish, and Vani, who's German, were made ashram receptionists. Since neither of them spoke a word of Hindi, the job was almost impossible for them. They had to spend a great deal of time on the telephone speaking to people whom they couldn't understand, and who couldn't understand them. They were constantly being yelled at for being so inefficient, incompetent, for doing everything wrong. When they finally blew up, when they couldn't take it any more, they saw how ridiculous the whole situation had been. It was hardly their fault that they couldn't speak the various languages required of them. But while they were still blaming themselves, while they were still trying to be good little girls and do the job they were told to do, the job was its own justification.

Bhagwan, and I suppose Laxmi too, seems less interested in having the work done in the best possible way. What seems to be more important is for each of us to discover for ourselves, through our work, all the fears and insecurities that lie buried inside us. When Vani (an ex-airline stewardess) exploded finally, she was able to see things inside herself that her accomplished, efficient façade never allowed her to see before.

Ashram life continually forces us to live in a state of insecurity. Sooner or later it forces whatever tensions lie beneath our well-protected masks to emerge. All kinds of crisis-situation are created, until finally there's an explosion. And in its wake, a transformation.

When Chaitanya and I first moved to the ashram we weren't given a permanent room to live in. Every few weeks we would be told that the room we were living in was needed for someone or something else, and we would have to move again. After over a year of travelling around the States, moving every day or two — Bhagwan had told us that we should never stay longer than three days in any one place so that we would live in constant insecurity as Buddha's monks had done — I was ready to stop moving around. I had never liked travelling; I like feeling my roots. I wanted a home, a womb. But as soon as we had settled into a new place, we would be dispossessed.

At 10 o'clock one night we were told we had to move again. The room we were to move into was dirty, dark and damp, and smelt of dead flowers that had been left there days before. On three sides of the room construction was going on day and night. It was too much. I

broke down and cried, I was inconsolable. I ranted and raved. But finally (what else was there to do?) I surrendered, I laughed at the ludicrousness of it.

I had always been very sensitive to noise, but after a few days I learnt to work and sleep with construction going on all around me until 4 o'clock every morning, workers shouting back and forth to each other and chiselling into the wall beside my bed. The sounds became a meditation technique; I didn't mind them at all. Once I had exploded about the room and the move, I could surrender to it. The surrender was something totally different from the bitter resignation that I had been deluding myself with before. It was an acceptance. Authentic.

Chaitanya and I stopped moving from room to room. Our next move, away from the dampness and noise, was our last.

When Prem and Rakesh came back from their three-day honeymoon, Chaitanya and I were living in their room. They had known that they were only being allowed to stay at the ashram because a room was temporarily available, and that at any moment they might be asked to leave, but to come back from their wedding-trip late at night and see that two of their closest friends had taken possession of their room was still a shock. They knew it wasn't our fault, that we hadn't had any choice in the matter, but that didn't make things any better. Prem went through every kind of rejection syndrome possible. Several months later, when she had finally reached the point of not caring whether she was living in the ashram or not, she and Rakesh moved back in as permanent residents.

People move into the ashram when they're ready to take the constant intensity and confrontation of ashram life. They're asked to leave on rare occasions. But it's not that they're being kicked out, it's not a condemnation. They're asked to leave because leaving is what's best for them, it's where their individual growth lies. Bhagwan kept telling Nitya for several months that if she couldn't change her attitude she'd have to leave. She couldn't; she wasn't ready to surrender. Finally she moved out. And in moving out, the surrender happened.

In Bhagwan's cathartic meditation techniques, one expresses the ugliness within to the void, so that one can get rid of it without throwing it out on anyone else. In the therapy groups at the ashram, one throws it out in an artificially created environment, each person serving as an impersonal backboard against which the other members of the group can bounce their hostilities and repressions. But those of us living and

working in the ashram no longer practise meditation techniques, we don't take part in any of the groups. The ashram itself is our meditation, our encounter group.

The jobs one least wants to do are often the jobs one finds oneself doing. The people one is least able to get along with are the people one invariably finds one has to work or live with. Couples break up. They continue to have to live with one another. 'There's no other place to move you to,' Laxmi explains to them apologetically. 'If you want to stay at the ashram. . . .' It's a game, a technique. Enemies become friends. Ex-lovers become lovers again, friends again, but without the same possessiveness and attachment they had before.

We play off one another: what one person is going through causes others to go through something. We're forced together twenty-four hours a day, while each of us goes through our own trips and our own growth processes. There's no escape. If your boss yells at you, you can go home and yell at your wife and kids, or kick your dog, but here the same people play different roles. In one aspect of the ashram's functioning you're somebody's boss. In another aspect you're the underling. The hierarchy is constantly shifting. One moment you're in the role of judge, of executioner. The next moment you're standing in the dock, condemned by your own tribunal.

It could be hell, but it's not. It's an incredibly loving environment, incredibly light, incredibly harmonious. There's constant insecurity — nothing remains the same from one moment to the next — and tensions sometimes flare up for an instant of intensity, but the explosions, when they happen, are so sudden, and usually so out of proportion to the immediate circumstance that precipitated them, that even while they're happening one sees the ludicrousness of it. Tensions disappear. One laughs, one surrenders.

Within the confines of the ashram, we have the freedom to express whatever's inside of us. Nothing has to be held back. 'Only be conscious of what you're doing,' Bhagwan says. 'Be aware of it. Watch it.' Which of course is a trick, in a way, because if you're conscious of your anger, really conscious of it, if you're aware of your jealousy, really aware of it, it disappears.

Anger and jealousy and hatred can exist only when you're unconscious, unaware. You lose yourself in them. The murderer says, 'I didn't know what I was doing.' The irate husband says, 'I lost control of myself. I was blinded by my jealousy. Blind with hate. Blind with rage.' When you're aware, when you can see the situation and see

yourself in it, the whole thing dissolves. It becomes ludicrous.

Looking back on what seemed an intolerable situation months before, one can see it with new eyes. With distance, things are reduced in importance, they take on a new colouring. If you remain acutely aware of this, even while the anger is rising within you, if you can give yourself a certain distance, if you can become a witness, a watcher on the hill, it's impossible to become angry. The energy that was about to move into anger changes direction and moves into laughter, or into meditation, or into gratitude to the person who has provoked your anger and enabled you to see something in yourself that you might not have seen otherwise. Your adversary becomes your guru.

It has happened to me with Chaitanya, it has happened to me from time to time with people I have to work with at the ashram, but I'm still afraid of letting the ugliness inside me come out. I try to avoid situations where I know that conflict will arise. I want to hide whatever's unlikeable in me; I avoid exposure. I'm a coward. My independence is a defiance; my defiance is a fraud.

Over and over again Bhagwan tries to uncover the fraud I'm perpetrating on myself. He wants me to see every shred of indecency I've learned to hide. He pushes me into situations where my nakedness will be revealed, but I run away and hide behind his long, white robes, comforting myself with the illusion that I'm living the truths I've learned through his words.

He keeps on prodding me, knowing that I'll run away as long as I can, but that in the end there will be nowhere left to run to. Backed against the wall, I'll have no choice but to see. As fast as I run away from the situations that Bhagwan has created for me, that's how fast he'll find new situations for me to work through. There's no rest with a master. He doesn't promise you rose gardens; he promises you life. The thorns as well as the flowers.

It's a subtle operation. You can co-operate with it or you can struggle against it, but in either case the work will be done. 'If you allow me to work with you easily,' Bhagwan says, 'then the operation is very easy. If you don't allow me — if you struggle, resist, don't co-operate, create conflict — then too the operation is going to be done. Once I have accepted you as my disciple, it's my responsibility that you be transformed. If you fight me, the operation will be hard. But the hardness will come because of your resistance, remember.'

Whether I like it or not, Bhagwan seems quite determined to make me lose my ego and ultimately reach his own state of perfect at-homeness

in the universe. I know already that there's no use trying to fight it, even though I'm constantly fighting. But existence is on Bhagwan's side; I haven't a chance in the world. The whole of existence, every moment, is working towards it. My enlightenment, your enlightenment, the continual evolution of consciousness.

The whole evolutionary process is a process in the development of consciousness. Trees are more conscious than rocks, animals are more conscious than trees, man is more conscious than animals, Buddhas are more conscious than man. We have no choice but to move from where we are to where we can be. There's just so long we can go on fighting. In the end, each of us will have to surrender to the inevitability of our own divinity.

It's a master's responsibility to see that it happens now, not a thousand lifetimes from now. Once you're caught by a master, you're caught. Attempts to escape are just an illusion. It's the beginning of the end.

Bhagwan is a dangerous man. He is teaching us to die so that we can be reborn. To crucify ourselves so that we can be resurrected.

Knowing and confusion

I'm a phony. I talk about acceptance but I'm not accepting. I talk about flowing but I don't flow. I still want things to be the way I want them to be, and I am as intolerant when life doesn't conform to my preferences as I always was. I've reduced my demands and my desires, that's all.

Expectation leads to frustration. Trying to be happy leads to unhappiness. Trying to control the environment so that you can get what you want leads, always and forever, to disappointment and suffering. I make myself suffer. I suppose we all do. But I should know better.

I know it. I see myself doing it to myself, but it continues. I don't live my own knowings. Maybe everything I think I've come to know existentially is just borrowed. I've heard Bhagwan speaking too much, I've read too many of his books. I've deluded myself into thinking I understand, I *know*, what I've only borrowed. I don't know anything. And worst of all, I don't even know that I don't know.

Bhagwan is always warning us not to take his understanding to be our own. 'Truth is only truth when it comes out of your experience,' he says, 'when it's your intrinsic knowing. The moment my truth reaches you it becomes a falsehood. The very nature of truth is that it is untransferable. You have to grow into it. My truth is not your truth; it becomes your knowledge. Then you become burdened with it. Truth liberates, but only if it's your own truth. A Christian is not liberated. Jesus' truth has become his bondage. If one person's truth could liberate others, then one Buddha would have been enough, one Christ would have been enough, one Krishna would have been enough. Scientific truth can be transferred. Religious truth must be discovered.'

But even when Bhagwan says that we can't make his knowing our own, his words become part of my knowledge, part of my accumulation. It's hard to prevent it. One of the dangers of living so close to an enlightened master is that you begin to feed off him. You live so much in his light, his energy fills you so much, that you begin to forget it's

not your own light, not your own energy, not your own knowing.

When Buddha died, his last words to his disciples were, 'Be a light unto yourself.' Rabbi Neftali, an enlightened master of the Hassidic tradition, gave his disciple a lamp to light his path one dark night. He walked the disciple to the gate and suddenly blew out the candle. 'You cannot carry my light with you on your way,' he said. 'Be a light unto yourself.' Two men walked down the road together sharing a light. They came to a crossing. One man was going towards the right; the other towards the left. 'Be a light unto yourself.'

Bhagwan reads about seventy books a week, and then regurgitates them for us in the morning lectures. He sifts through the dross and gives us only the pure gold. I've accumulated enough information effortlessly through his lectures, I imagine, to be able to write a doctoral dissertation on Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Hassidism, esoteric Christianity, tantra, the psychological ramifications of yoga and a dozen other subjects. When I hear pundits talking on the subjects they've spent years studying, they sound naive to me. Most of the information they've acquired I've picked up through Bhagwan's talks, without intending to.

I've also picked up Bhagwan's insights. Then I delude myself into feeling I have an ability to understand the scriptures and traditions that theologians and scholars don't have. I keep forgetting that it's not my analysis, it's not my own knowing that's enabling me to see the loopholes in other people's scholasticism. I feel a superiority that has no justification. I've just borrowed from a better source than others. The borrowing has been no less real, the light of knowing is no more my own.

Bhagwan says something. I see intrinsically the truth of it. I begin to feel that I know it because I intellectually understand it, or because it validates my own experiences. But it's not my knowing, it's not my light. I keep forgetting that.

Through being with Bhagwan, and through meditation, I've experienced moments of pure knowing. They come and they go. When I try to conceive of what it must be like to be enlightened, I can only imagine that it must mean to live permanently in these states of pure consciousness, pure knowing, that I've sometimes touched momentarily. I go into it for a second and then come out of it. Bhagwan lives in it.

But then when I'm out of it, which is most of the time, I begin to borrow from my own past, from my own momentary experience. The mind comes in and makes a moment of knowing into a philosophy,

a knowledge. I don't only borrow from Bhagwan. I borrow from my own knowing, my own past.

Bhagwan is totally spontaneous. Every moment is a totally new moment for him, every moment he lives a new truth. That's why he contradicts himself constantly. He says that the only consistent thing about him is his inconsistencies. Because he is not beholden to the past, not even his own, each moment is totally different from any other moment.

He can be talking to you. He'll say something. The next moment he'll say exactly the opposite. Your mind is left spinning. He *can't* mean both.

But he does. One minute one thing is true; the next minute another thing is.

In Bombay, when Bhagwan was still meeting with people privately, Govind and Gayatri went into his room to see him. He asked them what their plans were. When they said they didn't have any, he suggested that they leave in two days for California to help run the meditation centre there, but to come back and see him before they left. They packed, they prepared to leave India; they went to Bhagwan to say goodbye.

'Hmmm, Govind, Gayatri, where are you going?' he asked. They looked at each other puzzled. Was he kidding?

'To California,' one of them answered.

'Why do you want to go to California? That's foolish. You stay here a while longer, hmmm? Will it be possible?'

One day one piece of advice was right for them. Two days later, they had changed; the whole situation had changed according to this new truth.

Padma went to darshan a couple of months ago. While Sambuddha, her lover, had been away, she had been with Naresh. Now that Sambuddha was about to come back, she was apprehensive. 'You have changed much in the time Sambuddha has been away,' Bhagwan told her. 'Now it will not be so easy to be with him. You've grown, flowered, while he's stayed the same. There will be no basis for meeting. You and Naresh are growing together. Wherever your growth lies is where you have to be.'

When Sambuddha came back, Padma remained with Naresh. She went to darshan again a few weeks ago. 'Sambuddha is very beautiful now; he grew much while he was away,' Bhagwan told her. 'But you weren't ready to be with him. You chose lust and rejected love.'

What kind of game was it? Padma took her confusions and pain and

nursed them, worked with them. She looked deeply into what Bhagwan had told her on both occasions, she looked at her own behaviour, her own attitudes. She searched, she cried; she tried to analyse and gave up finally when analysis failed. She looked, she *saw*. Veils, darkness, dropped away.

'Life exists in contradictions,' Bhagwan says, 'but I am at ease with my contradictions. I don't try to make life consistent. I allow life to move between opposite polarities, I accept the dialectical flow of life without being stuck anywhere.'

But of course I get stuck over and over again. I'm no Bhagwan, that goes without saying. I try to cling to the security of what Bhagwan has said or what I've experienced existentially for myself. My mind tries to make a theory out of it, tries to cling to the security of knowing. I try to put an experience that is beyond words into words, and then cling to my own descriptions.

Words limit what is, they put a frame around it. We can't even describe the experience of looking at a flower. Our description is bound to begin somewhere and end somewhere, but the experience itself is so total, so limitless, that there are no boundaries to it. How much less can we express a moment of truth, a moment of knowing? And the ultimate experience itself — the ultimate realization to which a Buddha or a Christ or a Bhagwan comes — obviously is as inexpressible. Hence all the trouble. Hence the development of so many religions and so many sects, each with its own version of the ultimate truth.

What Buddha has experienced or Bhagwan has experienced is the same realization, but when they go to describe it they use words that are reflective of their individual backgrounds. They try to express the inexpressible in terms that the people to whom they are talking will be most likely to understand. Buddha's words were directed towards the Hindu mind, Jesus' words were specifically for the Jewish mind of that day, Bhagwan's words are directed towards the contemporary mind. If we make the mistake, as most of us do, of clinging to the words and thinking that the words themselves are the truth, then Buddhism seems to be contradictory to Christianity, Judaism to Hinduism. But if we use the words, instead of clinging to them, to grow towards our *own* knowing, our *own* experience of the ultimate, Bhagwan says, we'll know that the experience is one. Only words differ, only language differs.

The purpose of the words is only to help us to move inside ourselves. The master, whether it's Bal Shem Tov or Krishna or Christ or Bhagwan,

uses words as a technique to help us to move within, but then we cling to the words, we use them as an excuse *not* to move within. We miss. For lifetimes we've gone on missing.

I cling to Bhagwan's words, I cling to my own momentary, accidental knowings. I miss. I try to find the consistency beyond the inconsistency, the patterns. I'm so full of bullshit I can't believe it.

People come to talk to me. I begin speaking to them as if I know something. I hear myself being an authority on Bhagwan, an authority on meditation. I listen to myself lie and contort half-truths and half-knowings into a pattern that belies the reality.

I entertain. A dancing girl, deceiving through the illusion of exposure. Hiding what she claims to reveal, because she has nothing to reveal.

I can only talk about surrender, I can only remember moments of having surrendered, but I can't surrender. I can only have the awareness of how much I haven't surrendered to life, how much I still want to manufacture my own dreams. I grow more aware of the games I play, but I go on playing them. I see what I'm doing. . . I go on doing it.

I judge everything. Either I'm condemning myself for not being a Buddha or I'm congratulating myself for becoming more Buddha-like.

I'm a jerk. Even that's a judgment. I am what I am. To see it, to accept it, is all that's needed.

Simple. Elementary.

Beyond my capabilities.

(No judgment intended!)

Surrendering to the *sangha*

Everything Bhagwan does, everything that happens around him, is a technique. He pokes us, prods us, seduces us into transformation. The ashram is his instrument; it's his battleground. It's the scene of conflict and the source of the conflict. It's Bhagwan's most brilliant technique: for those of us who live here, and for those who are coming for the first time.

If Bhagwan's lectures are sometimes outrageous — if they're intended to shock, to provoke — the ashram is even more outrageous. It's the exact opposite of anything one imagines an ashram to be like. There's nothing sombre about it, nothing austere. 'Most ashrams are dead,' Bhagwan says. 'They lack vitality, they lack life. They're filled with dead people: old, dull, dying. People are not at my ashram to prepare for death; they're not here in search of any god. They're here in search of their own being. They're in search of a celebration, a dance. They're in search of the song they feel in their hearts but are not capable of singing. They're in search of the inner fragrance that they're carrying. The people here are in search of delight. They're not serious. Seriousness is absolutely anti-religious.'

The ashram is crazy, it's chaotic. It's the exact kind of ashram that Bhagwan should have, and the kind of ashram that no other master but him *could* have. It's a funhouse and a madhouse. A bawdy house and a temple. There's music and dancing and laughter. There's silence and reverence and stillness. People practise quiet Buddhist meditation techniques for eighteen hours a day, virtually in the middle of a construction site. T'ai Chi classes take place literally on top of group rooms where people are encountering one another or primaling, the screams from the group rooms a somehow appropriate counterpoint to the serene movements of the T'ai Chi. Nowhere are the circumstances ideal for what's taking place. Which of course is what makes it so ideal.

When one becomes a Buddhist monk, three vows are taken: 'I surrender to Buddha. I surrender to the *sangha* [the community]. I

surrender to existence.' To surrender to Buddha is the easiest surrender, whether it's an alive Buddha like Bhagwan or a dead Buddha like Gautam Siddharth. The master's only function is to help you, to create situations for your growth. If you trust him, then to surrender to him is relatively easy. It's to surrender to your own possibilities, to allow him to help you to evolve.

But to surrender to the community around a master is an altogether different matter. The community is filled with other egos who have their own problems, with other personalities who are more concerned with themselves than they are with you. How to trust them, how to surrender to them?

People who come to the ashram for the first time invariably fall in love with Bhagwan. Rarely do they fall in love with the ashram. Bhagwan is anti-organization, anti-structure, anti-rules, but like any organization, no matter how chaotic and unstructured it may be, the ashram has numerous rules. Certain areas are restricted for the use of ashram residents. Lao Tzu House, where Bhagwan lives, is off-limits to most people. For some, there are too many rules. For others, there aren't enough. Some see the ashram as a wild place of licence and licentiousness. Others as a place with too many restrictions.

There are ashram guards telling them not to smoke, people who sniff their hair before the morning lectures and evening darshans, in an attempt to protect Bhagwan (who's highly sensitive to smell and highly allergic) from any odour that might affect his health. Appointments to meet Bhagwan individually at the evening darshans have to be made through Laxmi or Arup, who are charming and gracious to some and matter of fact and distant to others. Some get darshan appointments immediately; others have to wait for weeks. Ashramites receive preferential treatment. They're allowed in the auditorium for the morning lectures ahead of everyone else; they're permitted to sit in the front, even if they arrive for the lecture long after other people have been seated.

It's probably inevitable for newcomers to resent the ashramites. We're no different from them; our egos are just as blatant, sometimes more so. Yet we don't do the meditations, we don't take part in the therapy groups. Who do we think we are? What gives us the right to special privileges?

'I love you,' people write to Bhagwan, or tell him at the evening darshans, 'but I don't love your ashram. Do you have any idea what's happening around you, in your name? The power-plays. The ego-trips.'

'I'm perfectly aware of what goes on here,' Bhagwan tells them. 'Nothing is out of my hands. What is happening at the ashram is exactly what's supposed to happen. If you want to surrender to me, you have to surrender to what's happening around me and to the people who are around me. Each person here is in the role he or she is in purposely, deliberately. I know their problems, I know their limitations. I know the situations they'll create for you, the conflicts. Those are the situations I want to be created. They're my instruments. They may not even know it themselves, but I'm working through them. I know exactly how they'll distort what I say. It's not that they're distorting deliberately, intentionally, but their very distortion sets up the situation that is needed for your growth.'

'Anyone who is in a position of authority to you, you have to surrender to. Sometimes you may be more right and the other person may be wrong — often it will happen that way — but still you have to surrender. Only if you are ready to drop your ego, your judgments, your rationality, your intellect — only if you are ready to allow me to cut off your head — will you be able to understand what is happening here. I'm only interested in people who are ready to drop their egos. My work is not for the curious but for the thirsty.'

The community around a master is a community of people who are together because of their surrender to the same master. Often they're people who, in other circumstances, wouldn't choose to live together or be together. Frequently the only thing we have in common with each other is that we're all sannyasins. There are French prostitutes here and Italian architects and English movie stars and Indian merchants and German hippies and Greek heiresses. People with a natural affinity towards one another, and people with a natural antipathy.

Buddha's *sangha*, Bhagwan says, was the first experiment in group therapy. 'That's what I'm doing here,' he explains. '100,000 sannyasins — it's the greatest experiment in group therapy that has ever existed. Sannyasins aren't meant to be polite. Everybody is here to show you your disease. Everyone is here for their own transformation and to become a situation for others' transformation as well.'

Bhagwan tells a story about two men caught in the woods during a forest fire. The first man is blind; the second is crippled. Alone, neither could reach to safety. The blind man carries the crippled man on his shoulders. One provides the eyes, the other the legs. 'The community around a master', he says, 'is a community of blind men and crippled men. Each has what the other needs. Each can be a help to the other.'

The master won't be around forever. His disciples are his eyes, his ears, his fingers, his voice. The master is the whole. Each of his disciples is a part of that whole; together, they *are* the whole.

Through surrendering to the community, one learns, finally, to surrender to existence. Which in the end, of course, is what it's all about.

All of us who are with Bhagwan, I'm convinced, have been together for lifetimes. There's a deep, intimate connection that one feels immediately towards people whom one has never met before. When Chaitanya and I came back to Poona a few years ago after having been away for six months, Saroj came running over to me. She began hugging and kissing me and telling me how glad she was to see me again. Her excitement was contagious: I was excited to see her too. We embraced each other like long-lost sisters. Then we looked at each other again. We had never seen each other before in our lives, at least not in this life. But the connection was there. Unaccountable but no less real.

When I meet people, I can usually tell whether they'll eventually take sannyas or not. There's something so familiar about those that do. It's as if I've always known them. Which, perhaps, I always have. Bhagwan says that it's not a question of whether one believes in past lives; it's a question of whether one remembers them. Belief or disbelief in something has nothing to do with what is.

Over and over again there's a strong feeling of having known other sannyasins whom I've never met before. Sometimes I immediately love them for no reason, and sometimes I immediately hate or distrust or feel threatened by them, also for no discernible reason. It's as if the connections between us were made long ago, when our personalities, conditioning and roles were different. But we're bound, somehow, to re-enact the same familiar dramas that we've endlessly enacted together, until we finally learn the lessons they hold for us, until we finally transcend our own patterns.

The people at the ashram seem to have a sandpaper effect on one another, as the ashram itself seems to have a sandpaper effect on everyone who comes here. It's a constant wearing-down process, until at long last our edges grow smooth, and the sandpaper slides over us, no more jarring than a caress.

Eventually one learns that what one doesn't like in someone else is a reflection of a problem that one has to face within oneself. 'Love thy enemy as thyself.' He is your enemy precisely because he *is* yourself. What you see in him and don't like is what you don't yet see in yourself, and wouldn't like if you did.

When Gurdjieff was running Fontainebleau, there was a man there whom everyone else felt great animosity towards. People couldn't understand why Gurdjieff allowed him to be there. But despite all the complaints, Gurdjieff refused to ask the man to leave. 'Everyone else pays to stay here,' he said, 'but I pay this man to stay. He's the most valuable person I have here. I'd pay him twice what I do rather than lose him.'

Certain people at the ashram have the rare talent of being able to press everyone's buttons. They're full of their own egos; whatever they do is an affront to one person or another.

But the more no one can tolerate them, the more Bhagwan seems to reward them. He'll give a power-hungry person more power, a greedy person more presents, an arrogant person more situations to feel superior.

If your greediness gets rewarded and it becomes more and more pronounced, more and more insistent, eventually you'll *have* to see it. It will be so blatant that even in your blindness you won't be able to avoid it. Suddenly a moment of awareness will come; the greediness will drop. Only from the peak, only when there's nowhere left for it to go, can it disappear. One sees, from deep within oneself, the futility of it. One doesn't have to be told not to be greedy; it doesn't become a precept. Existentially, one feels the self-destructiveness of it. It drops by itself.

And meanwhile, while these offensive traits are built up to an extreme, into a ludicrous caricature, the person becomes an instrument for the growth of so many others. Laxmi may press our buttons consciously, but these other people do it without intending to, just by being who they are.

A presses my buttons over and over again. When I can surrender to her it's beautiful; there's no problem. But when I can't surrender to her, when I get annoyed by something she says or does, I create a hell for myself. A remains who she is, with her own problems to work through. When I'm centred, I can see that they're her problems. When I'm not centred, I begin to hate her for being who she is, for being the product of her own past.

I'm beginning to see that the parts of A I find least tolerable are the parts of her that correspond to aspects of myself that I never knew were there. Her greediness has shown me my own greediness, something I never saw before, that I hid beneath a surface generosity. Lurking underneath the conditioning of my façade, I see my own greed hiding.

A's power-trips show me my own deeply submerged, subtle desire for power and privilege. Her manipulation of people and situations shows me my own desire to manipulate. She acts out all the things within me that I never acted out, and thus never knew were there. I see them in her, see my over-reaction to them and look within to find them inside me. Surprise! — nothing known to man is alien to me; I should have expected it. A's ugliness is my own ugliness. Only her beauty is her own.

Egos grow more and more pronounced at the ashram; people grow more ugly as they grow more beautiful. Because there's no code of conduct that would artificially make life run more smoothly on the surface, everything gets exposed; nothing is hidden for very long. We don't try to be polite to one another, we let it all hang out. The ugliness with the beauty. Nothing drops until it's ready to drop; there's no artificial pruning, no imposed limitations on what's acceptable and what's not. The ashram is not a place to hide, to escape from the world or from oneself. It's a place to grow. Through confrontations, through laughter, through surrender, through awareness.

Through love.

Therapy groups

When I look out over my balcony, in one direction I face the bungalow where Bhagwan lives; in the other direction I face the main gate of the ashram. For the last couple of days I've been watching an unending stream of people come through the gate. Many new faces. Many faces I haven't seen for months, or years.

I watch Sambodhi, a lovely woman from California, being greeted by a Dutch woman she hasn't seen in six months, by an Australian girl with whom she was in an encounter group, by a German man she had only known the last time she was here by sight, by an Italian man she once yelled at for no reason at all, by a Japanese friend, by a Mexican acquaintance, by the scores and scores of people who knew her well or hardly knew her at all, but who all are as happy to see her again as I am. She is hugged, she is kissed, she is embraced for five minutes at a time by one person after another. Sannyasins hug a lot, I've noticed. It's one of our ways of communicating, of sharing. There's no hand-shaking amongst sannyasins, no hearty/phony how-are-you-fellow-good-to-see-you-again. We embrace. We hold, we feel, we touch. We share our energy, our being, our joy.

Sambodhi is radiant. She is home again. Her crippled body has a grace to it that it didn't have when she came to Poona for the first time a year ago. Her face is free of all the tensions that some thirty-odd years of resenting her crippledness had given her. She is incredibly beautiful. As all of Bhagwan's sannyasins seem to become. People's faces grow more open, more innocent, more childlike. Their bodies become more graceful, more fluid. They lose their seriousness and heaviness and become lighthearted, and light.

No matter how many times I've seen it done, I still don't know how Bhagwan does it. He never seems to fail; everyone flowers around him. We come to him with all our tensions, all our madnesses. Through the meditations, through the groups, through the power of Bhagwan's presence, one by one we drop them.

Often one has to go through death-pains before new buds can grow. Out of the mud, the lotus blooms. But no matter how many hells one passes through in the process, the ultimate flowering seems inevitable. The ashram is a garden with hundreds of orange flowers, in varying stages of growth. Some in the process of dying; some in the process of being reborn. The old dies, becomes compost. The new arises from the decayed, fermented remains of the old. A new chance, a new birth, a new beginning.

'Never before has an ashram like this existed,' Bhagwan says. 'Never before has freedom been experimented with so openly, and on such a large scale. Secret schools have always existed — esoteric schools like the Essenes, Sufi schools, Zen monasteries and Taoist monasteries — where small groups of people have worked together in deep secrecy and privacy. In the past there was enough time for secrecy, but now there's no time left; humanity is at stake. I have to make everything that has previously been kept secret known to you.'

'To teach you how to be free and sane, I'll have to devise all sorts of mad games. Through these mad games, the accumulated madness within you can be acted out, thrown out. That's why you see so many strange things happening at my ashram.'

'Because the world is mad — because everyone is mad; it's only a matter of degree — catharsis is needed. People have to be helped so they can throw their repressions unconditionally. If they want to shriek and shout and scream, they have to be allowed. If they want to run and jump and dance, they have to be allowed. If they want to weep and cry, they have to be allowed. They have to be allowed to go crazy. When a person goes crazy on his own, deliberately, he becomes unburdened. Then the second step can happen: vipassana, zazen, silent methods of meditation.'

'My ashram is a temple of total ruin. Only when you die totally are you born as a totally new being. Then you know what God is. Only in that primal innocence do you come in contact with reality.'

Many of Bhagwan's meditation techniques start out with catharsis. They end up with silence, stillness, meditation. Now, much of the catharsis that people go through happens in the ashram groups; but before the groups began, several years ago, it was during the meditations themselves that we did all our catharting and exploding.

The early techniques that Bhagwan devised were all powerfully cathartic. Dynamic Meditation, with its rude, abrupt, dramatic awakening of the unconscious; *kirtan*, where we danced and sang in frenzied

oblivion; and *tratak*, a normally quiet technique of fixed, one-pointed staring which Bhagwan transformed into a mad, intense experience by combining it with jumping and shouting/chanting the Sufi mantra *boo*.

As time went on, Bhagwan added new meditation techniques to his repertoire, and dropped both *kirtan* and *tratak*. The first of these new meditations, Kundalini and Mandala, were more active physically, but less frenzied and chaotic. Other meditation techniques followed: Devavani, Nadabrahma, Gourishankar, Nataraj. These techniques were less cathartic, but they still used activity, doing, to take one to a state of total inactivity, total passivity. Bhagwan combined the old with the new, the most valid from one tradition with what was most valid from another. Humming, dancing, breathing, swaying, allowing gentle energies to move through the body. And meanwhile, Dynamic Meditation continued to be offered at the ashram as a daily occasion to rid oneself of whatever was inside that needed to be released.

Twice a day, 200–500 visitors to the ashram — sannyasins and non-sannyasins, the curious and the skeptical — gather together to meditate. At 6 a.m., Dynamic Meditation takes place. At 5.30 in the afternoon, Kundalini. During the meditation camps that occur from the 11th to the 20th of every month, three other meditations are offered throughout the day. T'ai Chi and Sufi dancing happen every day. Yoga, karate, mime, African dancing and a nightly music group for musicians, singers and dancers, take place when there's no camp. And of course there are scores of therapy groups, individual therapy sessions (in rolfing, Alexander technique, postural integration, massage, bioenergetics, shiatzu, acupuncture, etc.) and dozens of meditation groups taking place continually. Enough to keep one busy for months. For years.

Some people do all the meditations and most of the groups; others only do the ones that appeal to them the most, or the ones that Bhagwan has suggested will be particularly helpful for them. Eventually, Bhagwan has said, every technique that has ever existed for the expansion of consciousness — Eastern or Western, modern or traditional — will be made available at the ashram. He wants us to be able to explore every path, so that we can see that in the end all lead to the same realization. One reaches it through karate as well as through Tibetan techniques, through Sufi dancing as well as through primal therapy, through encountering someone else in a group as well as through encountering one's own unconscious in an individual meditation.

Bhagwan suggests active, cathartic groups for some people and quiet meditative groups for others. It depends on each person's needs.

'Therapy must ultimately lead to meditation,' he says. 'Otherwise it's incomplete. Psychology must come to the point where meditation becomes the most important thing.'

'Western psychology is just looking at your behaviour. Behaviour is an outer thing; it's not the source. Meditation is concerned with the roots, the source — not with behaviour, not with symptoms. By changing the source, everything changes. Without changing the source, you can go on changing everything but nothing changes. One symptom is replaced by another. You become a patchwork quilt, not a transformed being.'

Groups are just the beginning. In the West, people involved in the growth movement have mistaken them for the end, the ultimate possibility. A remark Teertha once made has stuck in my mind. 'The growth movement is helpful,' he said, 'but it has yet to produce an enlightened master. A Fritz Perls, yes, an Abraham Maslow, yes, but not a Buddha, not a Christ.'

Not a Bhagwan. It's Bhagwan, really, that makes what happens in the ashram groups so unique. Karuna, who started her own growth centre several years ago in Boston, and has both run and participated in many groups in the West, recently took part in two of the ashram groups. 'For me,' she said, 'the main thing that made these groups different from what happens in the West was the almost tangible sense of Bhagwan's presence. Teertha worked with that a lot in the encounter group. When he felt that someone was open and vulnerable, he would tell them to sit and look at a picture of Bhagwan. It was very powerful. Just by sitting and looking at Bhagwan's picture, I found that I could go beyond the point where I had always gotten stuck before when I was in groups. Bhagwan was there giving me the permission to go ahead, to transcend all boundaries.'

'There's a sense of total acceptability in the groups here. Nothing is condemned. There are no limitations, no restrictions; you can take things to the extreme. Group leaders in the West place limits on what happens in their groups because of their own limitations, their own fears. Their self-image is constantly at stake. Here the responsibility is Bhagwan's, so the therapist can allow things to happen; he or she can afford to take risks.'

'A therapist doesn't have to do anything,' Bhagwan says. 'He just has to become a vehicle for God's energy. He has to become like a hollow bamboo so that God can work through him; he has to become a passage. If the therapist is empty, if he is in tune with God, then a

tremendous energy starts flowing through him. That energy is rejuvenating, healing. 'My whole approach', Bhagwan tells the therapists who are working at the ashram, 'is that one has to become an instrument of God. Use your know-how, but make that know-how available to God. Learn all kinds of therapies, know whatever it's possible to know, but don't cling to it. Through all your know-how, let God flow. Let him be the source of healing and therapy.'

'Be intimate with the person you're trying to help. Respond to him. Don't listen to him like a marble statue. Sometimes laugh with him, sometimes weep and cry with him. The moment you respond, the relationship becomes alive. Then, much is possible. Healing is a function of love. That's why just by sitting near a master you can be healed. Love is the greatest therapy. Only because the world lacks love are therapists needed.'

All kinds of people come to Bhagwan, but the greatest single professional group is psychotherapists. It's not really surprising. Bhagwan's work incorporates what they've been doing, but goes beyond it. The ashram is filled with therapists from all over the world. It's a natural extension to what they've been attempting on their own. They've grown themselves, they've used all the tools the West has devised for inner growth, they've helped others to expand their consciousness and their possibilities, but unless they come to a master they remain stuck within the boundaries of what Western psychology has come to know.

Occasionally, in the course of therapy, one comes to experience dimensions that Western psychology hasn't yet learnt to deal with. Divya remembers primal experiences she had when she was working with Arthur Janov: mystical experiences, out-of-body experiences that she was afraid to tell him about because they weren't scientific, they weren't normal; they weren't permitted. Later on, as a therapist, she found that her clients would sometimes touch spaces that therapy couldn't account for. How to deal with these spaces? How to work through them?

'So many people become professional primalers,' Divya says. 'They reach impasses that they can't get out of. They get stuck in grooves, sometimes for years, with no end in sight. Then there are the drop-outs and the suicides that no one in primal ever talks about. When I met Bhagwan, I knew what it was that was missing in primal therapy. Someone who had gone beyond and come out on the other side. Someone who knew.'

Freud's psychology is a psychology of pathology; the growth

movement is a psychology of the healthy man; Bhagwan's psychology — what he calls the psychology of the Buddhas — is a psychology of enlightenment. Each psychology builds upon the psychology that preceded it: the growth movement uses, rejects and goes beyond traditional psychotherapy; the psychology of the Buddhas uses, and ultimately transcends, the methodologies and knowledge of the growth movement. Bhagwan has gone beyond anything that Western psychology has come to know and recognize. He is absolutely free, absolutely clear, absolutely without problems. He is the constant proof that something is beyond the level we've already achieved. He is the vision of what we can be.

There's a basic difference between the Eastern approach and the Western approach. 'Western psychology', Bhagwan says, 'still thinks in terms of a healthy ego. But ego can never be healthy. It's a contradiction in terms. Ego, as such, is ill. The whole Western mind thinks that people are suffering from weak egos. No! People are suffering from too much egoism.'

'The East has created the master; the West has created the psychotherapist. When people in the West are suffering mentally, they go to a psychiatrist. In the East they go to a master. The master's function is utterly different. He doesn't help you to attain a stronger ego. He makes you feel that the ego you have is already too much. Drop it! Let it go! Once the ego is dropped, suddenly you are whole and flowing.'

We're all so busy trying to cling to our egos, and Bhagwan sits there with no ego — flowing, streaming, utterly at peace. He builds up our egos, and he destroys them. He builds them up so they can be destroyed. You can't drop something until you have it. When we're weak, he fortifies and protects us. As we grow stronger, he lets us in on the secret: the ego has to die. Everything is an effort to encourage that death: the groups, the meditations, the darshans, the ashram, the situations that Bhagwan creates. There's an overlapping, a dovetailing of everything that happens. The therapies help the meditations to be that much deeper. The meditations help the therapeutic processes to be passed through in a minute fraction of the time that they would normally take.

Sannyasins, by and large, are more willing to take risks than other people, so things happen to them very quickly. Because they don't fight what's happening, because they've learned how to surrender, to let go, changes happen effortlessly. After fifteen days, they've been through primal therapy; they're finished with it. There's no need to endlessly

go on primaling, as people do in the West. They go beyond primal; they move into meditation.

Amitabh finds that in the groups he leads at the ashram there's a kind of contagion, a movement of energy from one person to another. 'I've never seen it happen before,' he says. 'When one person in the group goes into catharsis, five or six other people will suddenly pick up on it and go off into their own catharsis. A few other people will sit there with their eyes closed — not in some phony kind of meditation: zonked out! It's incredible. Watching it, I find myself moving into deep meditation. The room'll be silent for a half hour; we'll be spontaneously meditating. Then it'll happen again.'

'I don't have to do anything, it all happens by itself. My role is just to allow it to happen. In some subtle sense Bhagwan's telling me what to do all the time. Things I wouldn't have had the courage to do before, that I would have questioned, wondering whether they were right or not. Here, I just go ahead and do them. And every time, it's right!'

One of my favourite group stories is when Prabha, who wasn't in Amitabh's group at the time but who had been in an earlier one, ran into the group room in the middle of a session. She was crying. 'I'm so overweight,' she sobbed. 'Oh God, I'm so overweight. I can't help it. I can't stop eating.'

Amitabh looked at her. Without thinking, he responded. 'Who are you trying to kid, Prabha?' he asked. 'You're not overweight; you're fat.' She gasped, shocked. He pulled her over to the mirror. 'Look at yourself,' he said. 'You're fat. Do you see it? Take off your clothes so you can see how fat you are.' She took off her clothes still crying. 'Do you see how fat you are?' She hid her eyes in her hands; she was afraid to look at herself. 'Look in the mirror,' Amitabh insisted. 'Look at how fat you are. You're fat-fat-fat.' Tentatively, fearfully — this wasn't what she had expected; she had wanted to be comforted, consoled — she looked.

'You're fat, Prabha. The game's up,' Amitabh continued. He laughed. 'Fat and beautiful.' Prabha looked at herself in the mirror. She started laughing. 'You're beautiful, aren't you?' he asked. 'Fat and beautiful and sassy.'

'What do you think of Prabha?' he asked one of the men in the room.

'She's fat,' he said and laughed. 'And beautiful.'

The group formed a circle around Prabha. 'Go around to everyone and show them how fat you are, and how beautiful,' Amitabh told her. Prabha strutted around the room like a burlesque queen. Like a sexy

woman who loved her body and who expected everyone else to love it. And everyone did. She was beautiful!

'It's the kind of thing I never could have done before,' Amitabh said. 'I wouldn't have had the guts. But it was exactly right. Prabha became beautiful. She stopped fooling herself. She accepted herself as she is. She has never worried about being fat since then. She has begun to really dig herself. It's a big growth.'

There's a continuity in what happens at the ashram, so even when a group is over it's not really over. The same people that one has confronted and fought and loved and hated are still around. Another group happens. The meditations continue. And Bhagwan is always there at the centre — guiding, advising, overseeing, offering his unconditional love, his unconditional acceptance.

The evening darshans are meetings with the master, encounter groups, primal theatre. Bhagwan plays the role of therapist. He may tell one person to suck on a pacifier, another to kill a pillow effigy of his mother, another to imagine his own death, another to become a tree or a waterfall or an animal. He has people act out, in front of him, their greatest fears. He bursts their hopes and destroys their illusions, he forces them to face what is, instead of hiding behind what they want to be.

Sudha wanted to commit suicide. He told her to go ahead and do it; not to ask him about it. 'How do you want to kill yourself?' he asked her. 'Have you thought about it?' She nodded. 'Tell me.'

'Gas.'

He laughed. 'You know it's impossible to get gas these days in India even to cook with,' he said. 'You only decided on gas because it's impossible to get.' Everyone laughed, Sudha included. He laughed her out of her depression and her thoughts of suicide. How could she ever take it seriously again when he'd made the whole thing sound so ridiculous?

'You think you're going crazy?' he may say to someone, laughing. 'Good, very good. Then go crazy. Enjoy it.' But his laughter is so compassionate, so filled with love, that it never hurts. It's a laughter that heals, that helps one to understand, to see.

Bhagwan has an endless variety of techniques and an endless variety of approaches. He gives each person what they need on their own individual path. Whatever works is good. When it no longer works it drops by itself, and something else takes its place. Or nothing takes its place. Only watching. Only waiting.

I watch the people who are coming to Bhagwan for the first time as they go through the same kinds of changes I went through when I first came. Changes that on the one hand are relevant, authentic, and on the other hand totally irrelevant. One has to go through them to know that they're irrelevant; one has to change so that one can see how much one hasn't changed. One has to meditate through the use of some technique, until meditation begins to happen spontaneously, without techniques. Then the technique will drop. Life becomes one's only technique, and increased awareness the only indication of growth.

Psychotherapy leads to meditation. Meditation leads to awareness. Awareness leads to being.

Celebrating life

Today is Bhagwan's birthday. There are three celebration days every year at the ashram: Bhagwan's birthday (11 December), the anniversary of his enlightenment (21 March) and Guru Purnima Day (on the day of the full moon in July, when people all over India pay homage to their respective gurus). Each celebration day is wilder, more insane, more exhausting, more exciting and more absurd than the one that preceded it. Over 20,000 people from all over the world descend on the ashram at once. On the days before the celebration day it feels as though a storm is about to brew. The air is alive with expectation. One smells the fuse burning. One waits for the dynamite to explode.

People from every part of the world try to time their visits to Poona to coincide with these special days, so everyone seems to arrive at once. Those of us living at the ashram might prefer to avoid the carnival-like intensity if we could, but it's hard to deny the excitement of it. One gets caught up in it. Loving it, hating it. Loving hating it. Hating loving it.

The celebration days always remind me of Christmas as a child. You go to bed at night and the house is just a house. Only there's an anticipation in the air, a knowing of the magic to come. Christmas morning and the house has been transformed beyond expectations. It's all your dreams come true. The soft unreality, the dimension of magic and wonder that you wish you could live in every day. The newness of everything, even of the things that were there before. Through some alchemy of imagination, everything takes on a just-bornness.

There's always a last-minute frenzy of activity at the ashram to finally complete what should have been done months before. When you go to bed at night, the ashram is still in its usual state of chaos and confusion and construction that will take months to complete; but by 5 o'clock the next morning, when you awaken to the sound of music coming from outside the ashram gate, where people have already begun to line up for the 8 o'clock discourse, the place has been transformed

into a fairyland with coloured lights, with canopied tents where food will be served to the thousands of people who have come, with bright canvas cloths that stretch from hastily erected pole to pole, masking the worst of the chaos and construction that remains unfinished. Miraculously, there's a new office where there was just debris the night before. A dining-hall that couldn't possibly be completed in time is completed. Huge garlands, truckloads of marigolds, walls of intricately threaded flowers and leaves patterned into a picture of great complexity hide what remains unfinished, and decorate what has somehow, beyond all possibility, been completed. Nothing is the same; it's a new ashram. There are even coloured lights on our balcony, put there, apparently, by some nimble elf who climbed the walls of the building while Chaitanya and I slept.

By the time the gate opens at 6 o'clock, allowing people from outside the ashram to enter, there are thousands of people lined up. The normal day-to-day chaos has been replaced for the day by a different sort of exuberant insanity. The energy that has been building up for days is more intense than ever. People who have travelled two days to get here — by plane from California or by third-class train from various parts of India — are too buoyed by the excitement to feel their fatigue. Indian friends whom I haven't seen since the last celebration day. Western friends whom I haven't seen for months, or years. All here. Thousands of them. The children are home for the holidays. A family reunion.

It's beautiful to see so many orange people here from every part of the world. An increasing percentage of Bhagwan's 100,000 disciples are from the West — which, in our nomenclature, includes Japan and Australia — but when you're away from India, if you're not living at or nearby one of the 200 or so meditation centres, you're alone in your orange robes. A freak amongst conformity. A lone figure, set apart by your clothes. Judged and either admired or condemned before you open your mouth. One of the reasons for the orange clothes (anything from maroon to almost yellow is considered orange) is to set you apart, to make you immediately noticeable to others, so that particular situations are created for you to work through. After a while you get used to being stared at, to being made fun of, to being condemned for something that has nothing to do with you. 'I don't like you because your skin is black.' 'I don't like you because your clothes are orange.' 'I don't like you (or I like you) because you're a nonconformist/you're a conformist.' 'You're an anti-Christ, you're a traitor to your own

traditions. You've renounced the things I hold sacred. You're making a mockery of my values by rejecting them.' 'You're dangerous — you're a rebel, a loner.' 'You're a sheep, following the herd.' Whatever one person condemns you for, another admires you for. None of it has anything to do with you.

One soon learns to take the reactions of others for granted. You hardly even see it any more, and are amused by it if you do. You're always a stereotype of something to someone. You feel compassion for others' blindness, for their inability to see *you* beneath the façade of your guise. You feel compassion for yourself. You watch yourself judging others for their judgments. You begin to see your own blindness and preconceptions and prejudices.

Being an orange-robed sannyasin in the West is like constantly being on stage. To come to Poona is such an incredible relief, such a coming home.

There are, of course, far too many people to get in to the morning lecture. Far too many, even, to be able to watch it over the few closed-circuit televisions that are available. But the sound of Bhagwan's voice comes out over the loudspeakers. Twenty thousand people sit squeezed together on too little ground to accommodate them, and listen in absolute, awesome silence. No doubt their legs fall asleep, no doubt some feel the need to fidget, to move, to cough, to sneeze, but scarcely anyone does. The stillness is as remarkable in its own way as the presence of Bhagwan himself. The close proximity of body next to body. 'Think of it as cosiness not crowding,' Teertha suggests over the PA system before Bhagwan comes out and the lecture begins. Most people apparently do, thankful just for the privilege of being able to hear Bhagwan's voice, and indifferent to any discomfort they might be feeling.

The lecture ends. I spend the rest of the morning selling books, and the rest of the day in my room, avoiding the crowds but unable to avoid the noise or the energy. All day long, dancing and singing continues. At one time I would have been a part of it, caught up in the unending frenzy and dancing until I collapsed. Now, the more commotion there is around, the quieter I seem to feel within me. The more I grow still. The more I retreat into my centre.

In the days when I was a part of the dancing crowd, I couldn't believe how people could *not* be a part of it. I felt sorry for them for being so closed, so inhibited, so dead. I felt wonderful, I felt alive with life. I judged others and found them wanting. I judged myself and approved.

Still judging, I now decide that the people who are dancing and singing so frenetically are just looking for an excuse for a catharsis. While I, of course, have transcended such nonsense. I've been through it. I don't need it any more, I'm beyond it now. The same ego, rationalizing its superiority in another way.

I watch myself doing it. I try not to judge my own judging.

People start lining up for the evening darshan several hours before it's scheduled to begin.* From my balcony, I watch the people who are waiting in line pushing and shoving and trying to get ahead of one another. Earlier in the day the crowd looked like one big happy family. Now. . . .

I shower and dress for the darshan, and go downstairs. My own form of pushiness is more subtle, but I watch myself assuming special privileges so I can go inside ahead of others. I condemn, and then do the same thing. But in such a 'polite', 'shy', 'self-effacing', 'matter-of-fact' kind of way that it doesn't look pushy and presumptuous. It's not 'nice' to be pushy, so I've learned to be pushy with so much subtlety that most of the time I can hide the fact of it even from myself.

Tonight I see myself doing it. I laugh. I forgive myself. I try to forgive the other people who are trying to assure themselves of a place inside the auditorium during the darshan with so much less finesse, and less chance of success, than I. If only people could try to get what they want without making it so obvious that they were trying to get what they want. Pushiness as long as it's polite; greed as long as it's discreet; ugliness as long as it masks itself in grace. That's what being well brought up means: being able to hide your self-serving beneath graciousness. But around Bhagwan, none of that's possible. You can't hide any more. Sooner or later, inevitably, you're bound to see what's going on beneath what's going on. *The Games People Play* . . . the *Knots* they tie themselves up in. You see it happening while it's happening. You watch the reel in slow motion, each frame indelibly imprinted on your consciousness. You *see* yourself. You learn to recognize your own frailties. You learn to forgive.

Somehow — by accident, by skilful manoeuvring that I wouldn't have thought myself capable of, by relying on the most blatant favouritism

*Although normally darshans are for small groups of people, on the celebration days everyone is invited. Thousands come. Some sit quietly; others stand, singing and dancing.

and sitting myself determinedly beside Chaitanya as if I have a right to be there — I find myself sitting in the place of my dreams. O euphoria! O ecstasy! While everyone else is shoving and pushing (the uncouthness of it, the rudeness: how *can* they?), I'm sitting right in front, practically on top of where Bhagwan will sit when he comes out.

Next to me is Veeten, an English actor who recently took sannyas. For a moment I feel resentful that he is sitting in front, just because he is who he is. One of the reasons for the new name that Bhagwan gives us when we take sannyas is to encourage us to drop our identification with who we were in the past and become someone new. It's a rebirth, a symbolic dying to the past. But here Veeten is — through no insistence of his own, I have to admit — sitting in a coveted spot that he has no 'right' to be in (whatever 'right' is).

But I know it's not his fault; I forgive him for it. He doesn't ask anyone to treat him like what we scornfully, mockingly, used to call a privileged character. People just do it. I can hardly blame him for it.

When Veeten first came to the ashram, all the attention he was getting was incredible to me. We were sitting in the lap of God, and all the ladies around were oo-ing and ah-ing over some movie star. I couldn't believe it. Gandha said, 'But don't you see, Satya, it's because we've lost our inhibitions. We're like children again, acting out all our childish fantasies. I'm sure he's never seen anything quite like it before. We're all so *obvious*.'

Sheela teased Veeten, referring to him continually as The Famous Movie Star. Other women stared at him. I found myself watching him as well, as fascinated as the others (What made him such a big deal? He didn't look like such a big deal to *me*!), but less willing to admit it to myself.

Mostly I felt sorry for him. He seemed like a lost little boy. Unsure of himself, stiff. Out of touch with his body, out of touch with his feelings. He seemed to live on the surface of his emotions, hedging himself on all sides, neither this nor that. A schmuck like the rest of us.

But Bhagwan, I knew, would squeeze him out of his sausage casing and make his pores breathe. It's a thing he knows how to do; he never fails.

Already Veeten was a different person than when he had arrived a couple of weeks before. His whole being had learnt how to smile. There was no longer the same wall around him, no longer the same body reticence and aloofness. He had been through an intensive encounter group, he was being rolled, Bhagwan was working on him the

way he works on all of us. Veeten didn't have a chance in the world. None of us do. I forgive him for being a privileged character and sitting in front. After all, I'm sitting there too. Who do I think I am?

Rapidly, the auditorium fills to capacity. Outside, thousands of people wait their turn in line for darshan. Music begins to play. It's loud, hypnotic. There's a line of people dancing and singing along the back edge of the auditorium. The people who are sitting down — probably about a thousand of us — are swaying, clapping, singing. The music fills me. I sing and clap with the best of them. The energy's explosive.

Bhagwan comes out finally. It explodes.

There's madness. Thousands of people, keyed up for days, surrender to the full intensity of their feelings. I find that I'm sobbing. Inexplicably but totally. It's a beautiful crying. It comes from nowhere and fades off finally into nothingness.

Bhagwan sits on his chair, serenely calm amidst the chaos around him. He claps his hands slowly. He smiles, he laughs. One by one people come up to him for his blessings. For a while my eyes are fixed on Bhagwan, the incredible, still unbelievable beauty of him. I don't see anyone else in the hall, I don't hear anything. There's just Bhagwan, and my love for him, and my gratitude to him for existing.

He sits, acknowledging everyone who comes before him. Every gesture he makes, his every movement, is poetry. In movies that have been made of him, if you look at every single frame individually, in each one he looks as beautiful as if he had posed for it. In fifty hours of shooting there will scarcely be a single frame in which he doesn't look beautiful. And all the while, he is totally unconcerned with the camera and totally absorbed in what he's saying or doing, or in the person who is in front of him.

I'm still as attached to his physical presence as ever, as awed by the beauty of him. I know that what he is has nothing to do with his physical being, that what I see in him exists in everyone and everything if I only had the eyes to see it, but I still persist in seeing him as a person — from whom I always want attention, and who will never give it to me.

Will never give it to me because I want it. As long as I go on wanting it, that's how long he'll no doubt go on not giving it to me.

He turns in my direction to smile at the music group which is sitting behind me. He looks at me for an instant. He smiles. It's more than enough.

I begin to watch the different people as they go up to Bhagwan. Before him, everyone becomes naked. They expose themselves by the way they walk, by the way they look at him or don't look at him, by the way they bow down to his feet or don't bow down to his feet. Each person's routine is totally unique. Each gives them away. It's like a Rorschach test. I can see their bullshit and I can see their authenticity. I can see what they're trying to hide and I can see the beauty they don't even know that they possess. I wish I could see myself as clearly as I can see them. Who am I? Where am I? I look around to find me. There's no one there.

A woman comes up for darshan. She bows down to Bhagwan's feet. Bhagwan watches her, smiling. She gets up, staggers backwards, faints. Someone picks her up and carries her out of the auditorium. People start clapping, cheering, like it's a great victory. For Bhagwan? For the woman? For themselves? Maybe, like me, the people who are cat-calling when an unconscious person is carried out — something that happens every few minutes, every hundred or so people — are cheering because they're glad it's not them. Better her or him than me. They know that nobody's immune. The least hysterical, the least susceptible, is as likely to pass out or begin sobbing or doing something embarrassing as the most emotional holy-rolling *bhakta* around.

A few years ago, during a celebration-day darshan in Bombay, I fainted and had to be carried out of the room. I remember waiting in line to see Bhagwan and hoping I wouldn't pass out when I got there. There was no energy in my body, or too much energy. I could hardly stand. My knees kept buckling underneath me. I kneeled before Bhagwan and touched my head to his feet. The world stopped. I would have stayed there for ever if someone hadn't touched me and tried to help me to my feet again. I stood, walked a few steps away and then collapsed. Comatose but conscious, I was lifted, carried. The bliss of Bhagwan was too great for me to be embarrassed by it at the time, but afterwards I hoped that it would never happen again.

Which, thankfully, it never did. Since then, I've always been lucky enough to be able to scurry away to some safe spot on the ground where I could sit, stoned with ecstasy, or weeping uncontrollably with the most beautiful, profound joy. The celebration days are like some sort of orgiastic ritual. It's an insanity and a purification. A loss of one's inhibitions on the periphery and a gift of silent blissfulness at one's centre. A descent and a transcendence.

The faces of the people waiting in line are anxious, expectant, nervous

The shy bride or bridegroom waits for her or his beloved. The unknown, the mysterious, the promised. They face Bhagwan. So this is what it's all about! Something happens. How to explain it? It has no words, no rational explanation. But a moment later their faces are radiant. They can't contain themselves. They're filled with the glory of . . . whatever-it-is. It's all true, all of it. Their wildest dreams. More than they could have ever hoped for, more than they ever expected.

That one moment in front of Bhagwan is worth more than the whole of a man's life put together. You can see it in every face that comes before him. The most sceptical, the man who comes out of curiosity or who comes to mock, stands for a moment and, looking into Bhagwan's face, sees the face of God. And he knows it. In that moment, there's no intellectual evaluation, there's no attempt at analysis and dissection of the phenomenon that's happening. It's just happening. Despite oneself. Despite one's belief or disbelief in the possibility of it.

Leaving Bhagwan, people dance as if possessed. They laugh as if sharing the cosmic joke of the enlightened masters. They smile knowingly. They close their eyes in deep, private bliss. They hug one another. They love. The oneness of existence becomes a momentary reality, not an abstraction.

I move in and out. I close my eyes and become oblivious to everything but a deep silence and stillness within me. I open them and watch the parade of people, totally absorbed by it.

Kokila, a woman from California, comes with her ten-day-old baby. A few days before, when she brought the baby to darshan, Bhagwan told her, 'You've gotten your wish. You've given birth to God.' Now, she places the baby at Bhagwan's feet. He smiles and blesses them both. It's beautiful to watch. I feel happy for Kokila and happy for her baby. I don't feel identified with it, which I always have before. Whenever someone would bring a baby to Bhagwan I would start crying because I had never been able to do the same, my children had never come. But this time, when Kokila gives her baby to Bhagwan and Bhagwan to her baby, I don't take it personally. I just enjoy it.

Bhagwan's parents aren't here today. I miss them. They were the highlight of the last celebration day for me. Bhagwan's mother took sannyas about four years ago; his father about a year ago. Bhagwan has said that it's the first time in history that a father has been initiated by his son. It's quite incredible, when you think about it. For a mother to accept her son as God isn't so surprising, really. Every mother thinks

that her children, particularly her sons, are the most remarkable human beings on the face of the earth. But for a father it's different. A father always wants to remain master of his household. He gives respect, when he gives it, reluctantly. Bhagwan's father, in taking sannyas, has accepted that his son knows more than he does, that his son has something to teach him. That he may have given birth to his son physically, but that his son has given him a greater birth, a rebirth.

Bhagwan's parents say that Bhagwan is no longer their son; he is their guru. Even on the day of his birth — surely a parent's day as much as the child's? — they insist on being treated like any other disciples. While others, like myself, try to get away with being somehow special, somehow exempt from the lines and the chaos.

At the darshan on Guru Purnima Day a few months ago, Bhagwan's mother did a slow dance in front of Bhagwan, a private, dignified ceremony of worship. His father danced like a man half his age. He circled and swayed and clapped his hands. He danced a dance of joy and thanks, continuing until someone stopped him because of his weak heart. Bhagwan said once, 'My father is a rare man. Not because he is my father but because he is rare. I've renounced my family. My family hasn't renounced me. Never before has it happened.'

Bhagwan is the eldest of twelve brothers and sisters, many of whom have taken sannyas. As have aunts and uncles and nieces and nephews and cousins. To understand the unlikelihood of such a thing happening, the sheer impossibility of it, one would have to understand India and what the tradition of sannyas means here. Bhagwan's sannyas is different from the traditional concept (or, as Bhagwan would say, the present-day corruption of the original concept). It's not a renunciation of the world; it's a renunciation of one's attachment to the world. It's not to leave the society, go off into the woods and meditate. One lives in society, with one's family, but without attachment. Enjoying what's there, without clinging to it. Ready to leave it at any moment; indifferent to one's circumstances. It's not a path of asceticism; it's a path of total acceptance: accepting whatever is.

Bhagwan's sannyasins are celebrative, not austere. Sannyasin couples walk hand in hand down the street. They ride bicycles. They smoke. They make love inside of marriage and outside of it. Some of them drink, some eat meat. It's a shock to Indians, an outrage. Bhagwan and his sannyasins are making a mockery, they think, of one of their most sacred traditions.

Bhagwan's family's initiation, their support of his iconoclasm, has

to be seen in this light. Wearing orange clothes, they're broadcasting their acceptance of a concept that's very revolutionary in India. Most of the thousands of other Indians who have taken sannyas from Bhagwan are city people, protected from a near-compulsory adherence to tradition by their sophistication and education. Bhagwan's family are all village people. There's no urban anonymity and indifference to shield them from their neighbours' reactions. To call your own son or brother or cousin 'God'? How can anyone do it? But Bhagwan's family does.

His brother, his brother's wife and their two young children sit behind me during the birthday darshan. As grateful, it seems, of the privilege of being in Bhagwan's presence as I am.

The line continues to move. An 86-year-old lady from Paris who has just taken sannyas. A businessman from New York. An Indian film director. An Ethiopian college student. An Italian psychologist. A German doctor. Thousands of people, an unending stream.

It takes two and a half hours for the line to end. Finally, everyone has had a chance to pass in front of Bhagwan. The music stops. Bhagwan leaves.

The auditorium turns into a dance-hall. Chaitanya and I quickly escape; it's not our scene. I'm keyed up with as much energy as everyone else, but I want to be alone with it.

I go to our room, a refuge, while Chaitanya remains downstairs getting equipment ready for the monthly meditation camp, which begins at 5.45 the next morning.

He is still working an hour later. The ashram has quieted down — I brave it and join him.

The meditation hall is empty except for Chaitanya and me, two sannyasins who are sweeping the floor and a third who is leaning his head against one of the pillars and crying. Chaitanya puts on a tape of the music for one of the meditations in order to test the amplifiers. As the music begins, the sannyasin who was crying starts to dance. He begins to laugh. He is dancing, singing. The energy that was moving into crying has changed direction. The same energy is now laughing, enjoying.

Chaitanya turns off the tape. The boy's head is leaning against the pillar; he is crying again. The same energy. Back and forth. Faithful to its own intensity, not to its direction.

Twice more Chaitanya has to put the tape on. Both times the boy's crying turns to celebration.

When we get back to our room, Chaitanya hands me a telegram that someone gave him earlier in the evening. It's addressed to Bhagwan.

'HEARTIDST WISHING HOME BE RAMAIN AND LIVER KNOWN MORE AND MORE.'

I read it again and again, I can't stop laughing. It seems typical of the day and of the night, and of Bhagwan. I *think* I know what it means ('Heartiest wishes. Remaining at home. Live on more and more'), but I know I could be totally wrong. To each his own interpretation. To each his own unique version of what is.

I think of the phrase 'God knows'. Only God does know. That's what it means to be a god: to be one who knows.

God knows the reason for the day; I don't. I'm glad at least Bhagwan does. A perfect *leela*, a perfect absurdity. A perfect God-knows-what.

Part Two

Part Two

I've decided to start all over again. Nothing I've written even begins to indicate what it's like to be with Bhagwan and why anyone who is fortunate enough to hear the rumour of it shouldn't be foolish enough not to come here and see it for himself. If you heard that Christ was alive, or Buddha was alive, you would want to come and check it out for yourself, wouldn't you? Even if only to prove the falsity of it, to prove that it was a fraud.

The miraculous thing is that it's not. Bhagwan is the Word made flesh, the miracle alive.

How can I explain it, or even indicate it? Bhagwan says that the difference between an artist and a religious man is that when the artist experiences the vast, the unfathomable, he tries to express it, and the religious man simply gets lost in it. 'And the mystic comes to know it. The artist misses it at the very last moment.

'Whenever you feel that something unknown has come and knocked on your door, don't think about how to say it or how to write it. Let it be. Go into it, drown in it, be drunk with it.'

Maybe I shouldn't be trying to write a book at all. In writing I miss, so I can only write out of my state of missing. What I indicate is bound to be false; it's inevitable.

Still, I try. Because of the absurdity of it. Because it can't be done.

Bhagwan says that he goes on speaking every morning because what he is trying to say can't be said. He always knows that he hasn't really been able to say it. Again and again he tries. In a new way, with a different nuance. Around and around the reality.

I might as well do the same. Maybe someone will be able to read what I haven't written: the silence between the words, the truth beneath the interpretations.

Love at first sound

Bhagwan walks into the auditorium every morning for the lecture. The moment he walks in, the energy in the hall changes perceptibly. I feel myself growing silent, still. Without trying to, I sink into the centre of my being. Sometimes thoughts pass through my mind, sometimes I shift my position slightly, but what happens on the periphery has no effect on the stillness, the peace inside. I leave my body behind, my thoughts behind. They remain where they are — quieter than usual, but still there. I ignore them, they're irrelevant. I go off to some place where nothing exists but the stillness within me, and the sound of Bhagwan's voice.

Sometimes I listen to what he says; sometimes I don't. Just the sound of it is enough. The deeper I am inside myself, the less the words register. I love Bhagwan's slight lisp, I love his subtle mispronunciations. They're part of his charm, part of the teaching.

His smile is a lesson, the resonance of his voice is a lesson, the way he uses his hands when he speaks is a lesson. I don't mean something to be picked up, imitated. I just mean that it's all part of the game, part of his love song. I'm as enamoured of everything about him — his mannerisms, his gestures; the way he walks, the way he looks — as one is with one's beloved. Whatever the beloved does is wonderful, perfect. It couldn't be any different, it couldn't be any better.

Some people are first attracted to Bhagwan by the sound of his voice. Others by a picture they see of him. It's all part of the seduction. The people who are supposed to be with him will eventually have to come, through one lure or another. 'I'm knocking on your door,' he wrote once in a letter to a woman I knew. 'And I knock because of a promise made in another lifetime, in another age.'

It's my feeling that there are certain people who are supposed to be with Bhagwan, certain people whom he is here specifically to work with. Many of these people have probably already come. Some haven't. Whatever's necessary to get them here will have to be done to bring

them. Maybe a million people will have to come in order to bring the one or two who still aren't here and should be. If a thousand are called, only a hundred will hear. Out of that hundred, only ten will listen and do something about it. And out of that ten, only one can reach the goal. The master calls the multitudes that the few might come. The multitudes come that the few might reach. The oak produces a million seeds so that one may become a tree. A million men are born so that one may become a Buddha.

The first time Mukta met Bhagwan she was ready to stay with him for ever. But she kept coming back to the States, not really knowing why. I'm convinced that it was because of me. She didn't know it, and I didn't know it, but one way or another she was supposed to be bringing me to Bhagwan. Because I belonged there.

Mukta was like a guru to me, until I met Bhagwan. Then I dropped her — or we dropped each other — just as she had dropped the woman who had brought her to Bhagwan after she had come. There was no longer any reason for the relationship. It had served its purpose; it was finished. I had adored Mukta, idolized her. We hardly talk to each other any more. The minute I met Bhagwan something changed. The book was completed. My sequel didn't contain Mukta. Her's didn't contain me.

Many people have come to Bhagwan 'through' me; I've been the instrument. But it hasn't been a personal thing; it's had nothing to do with me. Once these people come, their relationship with Bhagwan is direct. They don't need me any more. We pass each other at the ashram dozens of times a day and rarely speak. There's no reason to. What to say? They're here. The rest will happen as it happens.

Aneeta saw a picture of Bhagwan in a pamphlet. She had been actively seeking a master for years. She had hoped Ram Das would be her master, Pir Viliyat Khan would be her master, Suzuki Roshi would be her master. She knew they weren't, that at the most she could only pretend it. She saw a picture of Bhagwan. She nodded to herself, she smiled. Something clicked inside her. Not like a thunderbolt, but like a gentle, quiet knowing. She knew that he was her master, without knowing anything about him.

We may think that we're seeking a master, that the initiation has come from us, but Bhagwan says that, in fact, the master has called those who come to him. Their coming, their seeking, is in response to his call. He knows who is to be a disciple before the disciple knows it himself.

Shunyam's wife came to Poona only because Shunyam and their two

children were here. She had no personal interest in Bhagwan. Yet despite her resistance, she soon fell in love with him. Still, she felt no need to take sannyas. 'Since meeting you,' she wrote to Bhagwan, 'I've become open to life. I'm in love with the birds, with the trees. To take sannyas from you would be to accept the part. You have given me the whole. Why should I now accept the part?'

'There are three ways to be with a master,' Bhagwan answered. 'Through the mind, through the heart and through the being. To be here because of your mind, because you are in tune with me intellectually, is not worth much. It is just a mind-trip; it doesn't go very deep. To be with me because of the heart, because you love me, is better. Then I can communicate with you, heart to heart. But if your being can communicate with me, it becomes a communion. That's what *satsang* means: being in the presence of the master, your *being* in the presence of the master. It is the highest form of communication possible: a transmission without words. Our beings merge. This is possible only if you become a disciple.

'This question is from Patricia. She loves me. Her meeting with me is through the heart. It is good. It is better than through the head. But more is possible. Patricia is already a sannyasin. She may not know it, but I know it. It may take her a little longer to find out about it, but I already know it. There is no hurry. She can wait a little bit longer, but sooner or later it will happen.'

The next day it did. Patricia became Samvida. She totally immersed herself in Bhagwan. She drank him, she drowned, she learnt to fly.

Amida had been with the first group of Aricans trained in New York. She had gone as far as she felt she could go with Arica. She knew it wasn't enough for her. She heard Bhagwan's voice on a tape. Love at first sound.

Shraddan bought a record of some Sufi music. On the reverse side was Bhagwan's voice. One day, just before a client came in (he is a therapist) he put on the record. He put it on on the wrong side. Out of curiosity, he listened. His client came in, was interested and asked if they could hear the rest of it. Shraddan began playing the record for his clients. Bhagwan's voice led them into deep inner experiences that they shared with him. One day a client asked him something and he knew for the first time that he didn't *know*. He also knew that Bhagwan did. A week later he was in Poona. Two days later he became a sannyasin.

Some come through relatives, some through friends, some through pictures or books or tapes. If what I'm writing right now has any

function, beyond its validity for me personally, it's that maybe someone will read it and decide to come here and check out the scene for himself, or herself. 'If you have any idea of what this book is all about,' Chinmaya wrote in the introduction to one of Bhagwan's books, 'you'll drop the book. You won't bother reading it. You'll come here instead.' The book has served its purpose only if you don't read it, if you say, 'The hell with words, the hell with reading "about",' and come here to experience for yourself what it is that's here.

I can't tell you what it is that's here. I can only tell you that it is here. It's not Bhagwan, and yet it is. It's something that exists everywhere in the world, in everyone, in everything, but we aren't tuned into it. Bhagwan is like a short-wave radio. Through him we can tune into the subtle vibrations that are singing in the atmosphere and hear them. He is an instrument, a medium, a finely tuned receiver that picks up what's there and transmits it in frequencies that we can hear.

A master is someone in whom you can perceive that, yes, God exists. Seeing him, you see God. Even if you don't believe in God. It's not a question of your belief; it's a question of your experience. You can't intellectually decide, 'This man seems to be enlightened. He can help me. I'll surrender to him, I'll let him be my master.' It's not an intellectual decision at all. It's a question of love. You fall in love with him.

And if you fall in love with a master, surrender is automatic. Love is always a surrendering of oneself. You lose yourself in it. The master/disciple relationship is a relationship of deep love. There's no reason why you fall in love with a particular master; it simply happens. If there was some reason for it, if there was some rationale behind it, it wouldn't be love, it wouldn't be surrender. It would be exploitation, manipulation, a bargain between two parties.

Someone can be enlightened and still not be the right master for you. You and he may not fit with one another; there may not be a loving congruity, a merging. Mahavir and Buddha lived at the same time, in the same state. Those who fell in love with Mahavir weren't attracted to Buddha and vice versa. Sometimes a person would be with Buddha for several years and then suddenly leave and become a disciple of Mahavir. Not that there was anything wrong with Buddha, not that he wasn't an authentic teacher, but he wasn't the right master for that particular person. The person would leave, he would join Mahavir. The merging would happen, the love would happen. And out of that love, authentic surrender would be possible. And out of that authentic

surrender, the disciple's own enlightenment would come.

Bhagwan says that it doesn't matter to whom you surrender. What matters is the surrender itself. Even if you surrender to a false master, if your surrender is total it will happen. 'From a false master', he says, 'at the very least you'll learn about falsity.'

Authentic teachers are rare, of course, but the world is filled with false teachers. Because of us. Because we can't see the authentic, we're blind to it. An authentic teacher is so original, so unique, so totally unlike anything else that we can't gauge him against our preconceived notions of what a master should be like. The false teacher, the imitator, we can see. He is just like our expectations. He has read the same books we have, he's modelled himself after the same familiar formulations.

It sometimes seems as if any elderly Indian man with a beard can become a guru in the West. Anyone who has achieved any degree of integration, anyone who has experimented with enough meditation techniques to be able to talk about them, or share them with others, can become a guru. All that we ask is that someone knows a little more than us or has experienced a little more than we have.

When Chaitanya and I used to travel around the States we kept meeting people who considered Ram Das their guru. We would be talking about what it was like to be with Bhagwan and they would say, 'Yeah, I know what you mean. I had lunch with Ram Das once. It was just like that.' They they would start spouting things that Ram Das had said as if they were their own knowings, when Ram Das admitted that they weren't even *his*. He borrowed from others, others borrowed from him and then used the comfort of what they 'knew' to avoid moving towards a state of knowing. They had all kinds of new-age, spiritual justifications for remaining where they were, locked inside their own patterns and conditionings.

I sometimes wonder how helpful people like Ram Das are. By giving people rational answers they make it unnecessary for them to move into the irrational in search of their own authentic questions. But who am I to judge? A lot of people have also been turned on by Ram Das, and Swami Satchidananda, and TM, and Arica, and *est*, who wouldn't be attracted to an enlightened master. A master is trying to kill you, to destroy you, to change you utterly. As you are you have to die, so that the new can be born in you. The old has to die, the past has to drop — it's a death. Not everyone's ready for that. One can hardly blame them.

Someone asked Bhagwan recently about all the so-called gurus in

the West and whether what they were doing was beneficial or not. He said, 'In the first place, 99 per cent of all gurus are bogus. And when it comes to American gurus. . . . If 99 per cent of all *Indian* gurus are bogus, what to say about American gurus, imitators. . . .

'But there are people who deserve Muktananda, Moon, that type of people. There are stupid people, what to do? Stupid gurus are also needed. Unless stupid people disappear from the world, stupid gurus will be needed.

'But sooner or later you will be finished with your Moons and Muktanandas, because sooner or later you will see that they can promise but they can't deliver. How long can you go on believing in them? Then, when you're through with them, you'll be ready to seek a true master.

'That's why I decided not to go to the West. It's a supermarket right now: gurus standing on their soapboxes selling something. It's futile to go. I decided instead to wait here. When people are finished with their Moons and their Muktanandas they're bound to come. And when a seeker comes, travelling so far, his desire is authentic; it means much. He's ready to begin.'

Fake teachers exist because we want something for nothing. We want guarantees. 'Do "this" and "this" will happen.' It doesn't work that way — it's not so easy, not so cheap — but we get trapped by our own greed. I read an article recently in which Ram Das talks about having spent over a year with a woman in Brooklyn, Joya, who claimed to be enlightened. He was taken in by her visions and trances and psychic powers, by the theatrics of her spirituality. She saw him as a coming Christ. He was flattered, convinced; he stayed. When he grew disillusioned finally, he could see his ego-involvement in what was happening; but while he was caught up in the trip, he was totally immersed in it.

I've always been amazed that people considered Ram Das a guru — he is still trudging along on the path like the rest of us — but I was still surprised to read about his naïveté in relation to Joya. He talks about being impressed by the fact that she once developed stigmata on her hands and feet. So what? A few years ago, when, for some unknown reason, I developed stigmata on the tops of both my feet, my only reaction was mild amusement. How could this be happening to me? I'm Jewish; I don't believe in things like this. But we seem to get awed all the time by other people's miracles and other people's experiences.

When Bhagwan was asked if he could do miracles like Satya Sai Baba

he said, 'I can do them, but I can also *not* do them. And that's the greater miracle.' He calls Satya Sai Baba a magician, not a holy man, and seems to imply that people who are attracted to someone like him are fools. 'What does producing ashes out of the air, or producing brand-name Swiss watches, matter? It's foolishness! How is that going to help you? How are you going to grow by it?'

Christ, he says, performed miracles because that was the only thing that the people he was working with were able to understand. They were simple people, uneducated. They were materialists; only something that could be seen could be believed. Christ took a loaf of bread and fed the crowd. Buddha taught them to meditate on their hunger, a greater miracle. When Christ wasn't there, there was no one to produce another miracle. When Buddha wasn't there, the miracle happened without him. The hunger was welcomed, it was used — it became a technique for transformation.

Bhagwan is not a miracle-maker; he is a master. He doesn't raise the dead; he makes dying an adventure. He doesn't cure the sick; he teaches us to enjoy our illnesses as much as our health. He cured Chinmaya of cancer, and there are probably other similar incidents that I don't know anything about, but not because he was trying to prove something by it. It wasn't an act of showmanship: 'Look. Here's what I can do.' It's just something he did. A personal matter between Chinmaya and him, the initial stage, perhaps, of the fulfilment of a covenant made lifetimes ago.

When Chinmaya first came to India to meet Bhagwan, he was dying of Hodgkin's disease and had been given less than six months to live. He debated whether to take sannyas. If he was about to die at any moment anyway, what was the point? 'You just take sannyas,' Bhagwan told him. 'The rest is my responsibility.' Marc became Chinmaya and the Hodgkin's seemed to disappear, to the astonishment of Chinmaya's doctors in the States. Cancer is an unexpected growth . . . it had unexpectedly subsided. That was five years ago. Meanwhile Chinmaya goes through the same inner changes we're all going through. Bhagwan didn't save his body just to save his body. But it was a necessary preliminary step, in this case, to the greater miracle of transformation that Bhagwan works every day with all of us.

When you walk through the gates of the ashram, there's a palatable, almost tangible feeling in the air of calmness and tranquillity, despite the chaos all around. It's part of the miracle that Bhagwan is. When

you walk into the bungalow that Bhagwan lives in (Lao Tzu House), the air gets heavier with the feeling. Walking through the narrow halls, there's a certain point where the change in energy again becomes dramatically noticeable. Further along there's another point where it changes again. The closer one gets to the room that Bhagwan stays in for twenty-one hours every day, the more potent the energy is. It's impossible not to get high on it.

When Bhagwan left Bombay several years ago to move to Poona, Chaitanya and I went into his empty room. The presence in the room was so strong it was hard to believe. In a way it was even more powerful than when Bhagwan had been in the room. When he was there, it seemed as though nothing in the room existed but him. What one felt, one attributed to his physical being. When the room was empty, that same overwhelming calmness filled the air. I felt more shy in the presence of it than I did with Bhagwan. The room was filled with nothingness, it was heavy with the void. How to explain it? Meditation. Instant bliss. Thoughtless stillness.

During the period that Chaitanya and I were travelling around the States, we used to stay in numerous people's homes as well as in motels. We could tell immediately what was happening in the lives of the people who had occupied the spaces we moved into. We knew if they had a lot of suppressed anger, if they were having a good sex life, if they were loving or tense, happy or sad, ambitious or satisfied. They left an impersonal energy behind them in the room, to be picked up by the next occupant. Which, unfortunately, we invariably did.

The more open one is, the more one seems to pick up from one's surroundings. It's not always pleasant. Sensitive people become alcoholics, they become insane, they learn early in life to shut themselves off, to become closed, so they won't feel the confusion of conflicting impulses all around them. We deaden ourselves because to be sensitive is to feel everything. To feel the pain of humanity's suffering. To feel it when you're in people's presence and to feel it when you occupy the spaces that they've filled.

A Buddha suffers for the whole of humanity; he feels it all. Most of us learn to shut it out, we deaden ourselves to various degrees. Meditation opens us up again. Buddhahood is the ultimate opening. Hence the compassion of a Buddha, the love of a Christ. Our pain is their pain; they accept it all. Deep within their blissfulness, they suffer our agonies. Their bliss contains our pain.

Bhagwan's room, whether he is in it or not, contains his blissfulness,

the energy of his enlightenment. The people who work in Lao Tzu House have the highest status in the ashram mythology because they're physically closest to his energy. To scrub floors in Lao Tzu House is a higher-status job than to be an editor. A carpenter or an electrician or a guard who works in Lao Tzu has higher status than a doctor or an accountant. Higher because of the privilege of being close to Bhagwan's energy field. His energy, his enlightenment, is the miracle and the catalyst, the technique and the meditation.

Most enlightened masters live quietly by themselves, or they live quietly with a few close disciples. In the Sufi tradition, for example, an enlightened master remains in the world, working at an ordinary job. He may be a tailor or a cobbler or a pedlar. Most people who meet him won't recognize that he is enlightened. But those who see that there's something different about this man are capable of being helped by him. They become his disciples.

There's a certain ego investment in having found an authentic teacher that no one else knows about. When Anuradha met Bhagwan and took sannyas, she wrote to the group of people she had been travelling around the world with, in search of a Sufi master, that she had found him. 'How can he be an authentic teacher?' they wrote back. 'He is too well known. It's impossible. A real teacher remains hidden from the masses.'

Anuradha replied: 'But where better for an authentic teacher to hide than behind the robes of a charismatic, awesomely beautiful guru? He's one kind of teacher on the surface. His inner teaching lies beneath.' Who has eyes to see will see. . . .

Anuradha's answer seemed exactly right to me. Rarely does an authentic enlightened master attract thousands and thousands of people to him, but a Buddha, a Mahavir or a Christ does. Their realization may be no different from the realization of an enlightened master few know anything about, but their ability to communicate, and their ability to lead others on the path towards their own enlightenment, is unique.

Buddha or Christ or Bhagwan are more than enlightened. They're also extraordinarily effective teachers, capable of helping thousands of others on their own spiritual paths. Krishnamurti is enlightened, just as Bhagwan is, but he talks to unaware people about being aware, he tells people who have never experienced meditation that there's no 'how' to it, there's no technique to it — 'you simply *do* it!' He is right, what he is saying comes from his own inner knowing, his own realization, but we need techniques to take us to the place where no techniques are

needed, we need 'hows', until we can see existentially for ourselves that there are no 'hows'.

Bhagwan has a different door for everyone to enter. That's his uniqueness; that's the miracle. Anyone can start, from wherever he is. Whoever is ready to take the first step, Bhagwan is ready to push. He doesn't have one particular path, for only one particular type of person. All paths are his.

Christians are here, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Moslems, atheists. He guides each of us on our own unique path. People who have been with Gurdjieff are here (where else for them to go, now that Gurdjieff has left his body?), people who have been on every conceivable spiritual path — ex-Aricans, *est* graduates, former Hare Krishna people, Sufis, ex-monks, ex-priests, gurus from all over the world with their own followings — are all here. The next stage in the process. Inevitable.

'I'm proclaiming a new religion,' Bhagwan has said, 'the essential religion. In Islam it is called Sufism, in Buddhism it is known as Zen, in Judaism it is known as Hassidism. Each age has to discover truth on its own, each age has to find its own way of expressing it, its own way of dancing it, its own way of singing it, its own gospel, its own scripture, its own master.'

One becomes a disciple because one has fallen in love with a master. Bhagwan has so many disciples because so many people fall in love with him. When you meet him, it's almost impossible not to. Parents come to try to lure their children back home and back to respectability. They fall in love themselves. They put on orange clothes. They stay.

Love seems to be contagious. A communicable disease called 'health'.

From sex to samadhi

Gurdjieff called his work 'the work'. Bhagwan calls his work 'play'. The emphasis is on spontaneity, on playfulness. I can see the effectiveness of it even in the writing I'm trying to do now. When I know what I want to write ahead of time, when I have certain points I want to cover in a chapter, the writing is torturous; I hate it. But when I just allow it to flow, allowing whatever comes out to come out, I not only enjoy doing it, but the results are better.

Most spiritual scenes are deathly serious. 'This' has to be done, 'this' has to be achieved. Regimentation, a new set of 'shoulds'. Spiritual goals rather than worldly goals, but goals all the same. Trying to achieve nothingness rather than riches or power, but still trying to achieve.

Bhagwan tells us to dance and sing. To enjoy life. I watch the Sufi dancing group that takes place directly after the morning lecture every day. Several hundred people prancing around like imbeciles, having the courage to be children again and to enjoy themselves like exuberant kindergarteners. I notice Veeten in the group, as giggly as the rest. Not for the cameras, for himself. He is *loving* it. It may look ridiculous when you watch it from the outside — 'They must be mad! How *can* they?' — but it's an incredible high when you're doing it yourself.

'Life is ridiculous,' Bhagwan says, 'because it's not serious. It's a play. God loves children, he loves innocence. That's why every day old people are taken away and he goes on sending babies [everyone laughs]. How absurd [more laughter]! A person has been trained for seventy years. He's become a great philosopher, or a professor, or a scholar. So many BAs and MAs and PhDs. Then suddenly this mad God takes him away [laughter]. What type of economics is this [laughter]? And instead, sends a baby — crying and howling. Again, train him [laughter]. Send him to school, to college, to the university. And by the time he's ready [laughter], and seems to be of any use [laughter], here God comes and takes him away [laughter]. It's absurd.

'God loves the absurdity. God is not utilitarian; he believes in play. By the time you become too serious he says, "Now it's time [laughter]! Come back home [laughter]. I will dismantle you and send you again [laughter]. Now you need a mindwash [laughter]. You have become too trained, too disciplined. You are too much of a commodity; you have no freedom."'

Bhagwan plays the audience like a finely tuned instrument. He milks every possibility. We explode with laughter. Laughter is the teaching. Irreverence is the teaching. Joy. Acceptance. Yea-saying.

It's a tantric ashram, there's no doubt about it. A place where everything's accepted and nothing prohibited. Each is free to live his own life as he chooses to. One is free to grow. One is free not to grow.

Many people are attracted to Bhagwan as a tantric master. He doesn't deny sex. He says that sex is good, it's beautiful, one should enjoy it; that even sex can be used to lead one into meditation. Nothing is good or bad in and of itself. It's not what you do; it's the consciousness behind the doing.

Bhagwan is a tantric master surrounded by celibates. It sounds like a contradiction on the surface, perhaps, but it's probably inevitable. If you move into sex totally, naturally, sooner or later you'll transcend it. Unfulfilled needs become sublimated perversions. Needs that are fully satisfied drop by themselves, without any doing on your part. More and more people around Bhagwan are moving into celibacy, but it's not a celibacy that's imposed upon them from the outside. It's spontaneous. Sex isn't repressed or denied. It's accepted, enjoyed and ultimately transcended.

One of the things about Bhagwan that people are always curious about is: 'Does he or doesn't he?' We're not only concerned about our own sexuality — depending on our orientation and conditioning: how to improve our sex life or how to drop sex altogether — we're also curious about everyone else. Particularly about someone like Bhagwan. Is he a man in the same sense as other men? Does he have the same drives? If he does (or doesn't) is it a growth or a failure, a transcendence or an impotence?

Gurdjieff had sex with lots of women. Many enlightened masters have been householders with families of their own. Even Christ's relationship with Mary Magdalene may have had more to it than Christians care to admit. As for Bhagwan, how is one to know?

Bhagwan no longer sees disciples privately, but in Bombay, when he

did, rumours were rampant about him having sex with his female disciples. He seemed to do his best to encourage the rumours, partly by never denying them.

Most of us during the Bombay days had heard, very matter of factly, that Bhagwan 'gave energy' to all the Western girls ('giving energy to' being the Indian euphemism for 'having sex with'). Each of us waited our turn. It never came. One girl felt so rejected by it that she went into Bhagwan crying. 'What's wrong with me?' she asked him. 'Why won't you have sex with me?'

Bhagwan laughed. He asked her where she had heard that he 'gave energy' to female sannyasins from the West. 'You tell everyone that I gave you energy today,' he instructed her. 'Anything you want to say, you say. Fantasize. Make a good story out of it. I have to give people something to gossip about. They love to gossip.'

And elsewhere: 'I have to spread rumours about myself. If you hear something about me that you can't accept, and still you accept me, still you love me, only then have you surrendered to me, and only then can I work with you.'

For Indians, the idea of an enlightened man having sex is preposterous. If he's sexual, it proves he isn't enlightened. As if the lower can judge the actions of the higher. How to judge? On what basis can one presume to issue certificates of enlightenment?

Indians are so repressed sexually that rumours about Bhagwan having sex with the loose, pretty, sexually-free young women from the West who were his disciples were probably inevitable. Chaitanya even heard before he came that Bhagwan had sex with young Scandinavian boys. People see and believe what they want to see and believe. They judge others by their own desires, and project on others their own dreams. Bhagwan is a pure mirror. People play out their fantasies in the reflection.

I have a feeling that if other people hadn't started these rumours about Bhagwan, he would have done it himself. It was a perfect situation to drive puritanical, self-righteous Indians away. 'I don't want people here who are here because of the mind,' Bhagwan has said. 'I want people here who are here because of the heart, who are here because they're ready to grow, ready to change. I used to have thousands of Indians around me. They would come to all my lectures. They were followers, not disciples. They would listen to my words, but they weren't ready to move to a different level. My words become the block, the hindrance. But people like that — it's easy to get rid of them. I

gave one lecture: "From Sex to Superconsciousness". Finished! They all left.' Bhagwan's frank discussions about sex, the rumours that he either initiated or encouraged, all helped the weeding-out process to happen. Those who didn't belong with Bhagwan left; the crowds thinned. Of the thousands who came regularly to hear his public lectures, only a small fraction remained behind and became disciples.

Now, more Westerners are coming to Bhagwan than Indians. For us, sex isn't something to be condemned, hidden. In many ways we seem to measure our worth by it; it's our own perversion. Consequently the 'does he or doesn't he?' controversy is no longer particularly useful. Bhagwan no longer uses it to create a situation for people to leave him. Group darshans happen instead of private interviews. There's no longer any occasion to wonder.

It may be that at one time Bhagwan had sex with some of his female disciples. How am I to know? How can I deny it, resolutely, like a bishop defending Mary's virginity or Christ's chastity?

I know for myself, though, that as meditation has gone deeper and deeper I've become less and less sexual. Generally the only time I feel sexual these days is when I'm feeling tense. Energy is one. It can be released in sex; it can be expended in work, in creativity; it can move upward and be released in meditation. It's the same energy. When it's moving into meditation, it stops moving into sex. A higher door is opened to it, a more intense bliss becomes available. It's not that you give up sex; sex drops automatically. If someone hands you diamonds, you drop your pebbles and take them. You don't bemoan the loss of the pebbles, you don't even miss them. You enjoy the diamonds.

I can see it happening inside myself. It's happening in most of the people around here. If we're outgrowing sex as a need, though not necessarily as a pleasure, obviously the same must be true for Bhagwan. It's impossible to think of him as having sexual needs when even I rarely do.

Which is not to say that one can't enjoy sex, or that sex can't be used as a meditation. Tantra, which uses sex to take one into meditation, says that the sex act should happen only when you're cool, meditative; not when you're impassioned. Only when sex isn't a need, only when it's your choice, your preference and not your compulsion, can it become meditative. Man making love to the whole of existence through the body of a woman, and vice versa. Two energies merging, dissolving into each other. Male/female, yin/yang, I/thou — polarities disappear. There's oneness, wholeness, union.

To be in the same room with Bhagwan — for that matter, to be in a room that he's *been* in — puts one in a state of blissfulness that can best be compared with what one feels at the moment of orgasm. But it's a total orgasm of the body, not of the genitals. And it lasts for hours, not for seconds. For an enlightened master, I suspect, it's the state he lives in. A constant state of perpetual orgasm. Moment-to-moment fulfilment. Permanent satiation.

If one can experience orgasm just by being near Bhagwan, I can imagine (or can't imagine) what the experience of being with him sexually would be like. Too much. An annihilation. An immediate addiction. How the ego would build *that* one up!

If Bhagwan did 'give energy' to female disciples at one time — there's an esoteric tradition of it in India (never quite accepted as being entirely respectable, however) — then the chances are that he stopped because people weren't mature enough to understand it or to benefit by it. They didn't see it as a transmission of energy (as *shakti* initiation); they saw it in the light of their own sexual preoccupations and needs.

When I first arrived in India, Bhagwan was giving people individual tantric meditation techniques that worked directly with sex energy. Now, while he may still be giving certain people or certain couples tantric techniques to experiment with, it's less common. We didn't understand, we weren't mature enough. We talked about what should be private, we compared notes, we took what he said as an excuse for licence. We reduced the esoteric to the mundane. In our immaturity, we used the profound as the superficial, so that it lost its profundity.

By the time I came to India, only Vivek was seeing Bhagwan regularly. She would see him twice a day, for a couple of hours each time. The women who had been around during the period when Vivek was first being singled out went through varying degrees of jealousy. They were forced to confront their attachment to Bhagwan, their possessiveness, their expectations. But since it was an established fact by the time I came that Vivek was somehow special, that she was entitled to certain privileges that the rest of us didn't have, there was no reason for me to feel jealous. I hadn't been pushed aside; it was the situation I had walked into, it simply was. Vivek soon became my closest friend. How could I be jealous of her? I loved her.

Vivek would come out of Bhagwan's room. Almost invariably, she would sit down next to me. She would feel exactly like Bhagwan; it would be like sitting next to him. I always wanted to close my eyes

and sink into meditation, but she would start talking right away, or playing. Her energy felt just like Bhagwan's. He *had* to have given her energy somehow or other, I could *feel* it in her. We never spoke about it of course, but I made assumptions. I projected my own fantasies.

People frequently ask Bhagwan who Vivek is, and what her role is. She is a silent accompaniment to him, wherever he goes. She is just there, somehow. A female energy sitting beside him and walking behind him. Behind one set of closed doors she is the housewife/housekeeper/nursemaid who cares for him physically: who sees that his food is well prepared, his robes washed, his room cleaned, his body healthy. Behind another set of closed doors she is . . . what? His eyes to the outside world? (He never leaves his room; she does.) His confidante? His playmate? His closest disciple?

Bhagwan has spoken about Vivek fairly recently in the morning lectures for the first time. When someone asked him the other day if he had ever had a girlfriend he said, 'Yes, once. She died in '47' — Bhagwan would have been sixteen at the time. 'When she died, she promised me that she would come back and take care of me. And she has. Vivek doesn't remember it — I've told her, but she doesn't remember — but she was my girlfriend in her last life. And she has come back. She's fulfilling her promise.'

Someone else asked, more to the point: 'What do you do with Vivek?' He answered:

'It's difficult to explain. Vivek is so close to me that she is constantly on the cross. She has to be. To be close to me is arduous. The closer you are to me, the more you have to transform yourself, the more you feel your unworthiness.

'I go on creating many situations for her. I have to create them. Only through harder and harder situations does one grow.

'I am killing her slowly. That is the only way for her to get a totally new being, to be reborn. It is a cross to be with me. You ask what I'm doing with her? I'm crucifying her, slowly.'

It hardly seems like the kind of thing to be jealous of, but of course we're always judging from the outside things that can only be seen from within; it's an old story.

Whatever Bhagwan does, he does in total consciousness. That's the difference between him and us. If an enlightened master is angry, he is consciously angry. It's deliberate. It's his choice. If he laughs, he laughs consciously; if he cries, he cries consciously; if he moves into sex, he moves into it consciously. We're pulled and pushed by unconscious

motivations. An enlightened master is totally conscious. Nothing drives him. He has taken over the steering-wheel himself; he's master of his own life.

Tantra says not to deny what's in the unconscious. Accept it so that you can see it. Use it. Whether it's anger, or sex, or jealousy, or hatred. Any energy can be transformed. Play with it, enjoy it. The more you accept what's inside you, the more conscious it becomes. And the more conscious you become.

'Seeker of truth, follow no path. All paths lead there. The truth is here.' Within you. Within your desires and your motivations. Within the dark, undiscovered jungle of your unconscious. Out of the mud, the lotus grows. A spontaneous flowering. A benediction. An absurd joke.

Chaitanya

Chaitanya just came back from the lecture, which I didn't go to this morning because I have a cold. I stop what I'm doing and climb on to the bed to hug him. The nine extra inches make us a perfect hugging height. I melt into him. He feels like God to me. Every day I seem to love him more. Every time I see him it's the beginning of a new relationship.

We love, we hate; we play, we fight. The intensity is always as great as if we had just met, just fallen in love. We're together constantly, we see each other a hundred times a day, but each time it's a 'Where have you been all my life?' thrill. Celestial music, no doubt, plays in the background. The gods smile.

The fighting diminishes, the love grows. Bhagwan says that man, as he is, is not capable of love. 'You call your sex "love", your possessiveness "love", your need for security "love". You're afraid to be alone so you call it love. It is not. Only a Buddha is capable of love, only a Christ is capable of love.' The more I'm able to love, the more I see how much I don't love. I adore Chaitanya, I think he is the most beautiful person I've ever met, besides Bhagwan, but I want him to be who I want him to be, and all the while he goes on being who he is: someone that it's not always easy for me to love. And then of course I hate him for not being someone I can love. It forces me to confront my non-lovingness, my non-acceptance. Something that, like the rest of us, I would rather not see.

I want Chaitanya to conform to my images. 'Come on, Chaitanya, be who *I* want you to be,' I keep telling him when he is not. 'We're supposed to be living my reality, remember? You have to act the way I tell you to act, okay?' It's become a joke by now. We can each see what we're doing — I want us both to inhabit *my* world; he wants us both to inhabit his — but we go on doing it. It's a mock/serious battle: whose fantasies are we going to act out now?

It's Chaitanya's public image — the gentle, Buddhalike personality

that other people sometimes find so exasperating — that I think I love the most about him. Whom I live with, of course, is someone entirely different: a Groucho Marx comic, driving me crazy with his half-wit jokes and impersonations. Our room is peopled with a hundred make-up characters who are wanting to play constantly, even when I don't want to.

'Come on, Chaitanya, please. Enough is enough, okay?'

'I can't help it if they're here,' he protests. 'I didn't invite them. Go away, Blacky. She doesn't want to play now. Come on, Blue, out! We'll see you later.' He is incorrigible. He refuses to be who I want him to be. If I want to live with the beautiful parts of him I have to live with the six-year-old child too. They go together: the Buddha and the baby.

Chaitanya plays constantly. He makes me laugh constantly, despite myself. I love him for it and hate him for it. He won't let me be serious no matter how much I try. I get depressed, or angry, or intensely serious about something, and the next thing I know Chaitanya has me laughing. It's infuriating. I don't *want* to be laughing; I'm in a bad mood. But there's nothing I can do about it; the energy changes direction. Crying turns to laughter, hate to love, self-importance or self-denigration to amused detachment.

A few years ago, in self-defence, I decided that Chaitanya and I should each have 'our' days. On my days he couldn't do any of the things I don't like him to do (mostly the very things I fell in love with him for in the first place), but on his days he could do whatever he wanted and I had to surrender to it.

His days were a lot more fun than my days. I surrendered to whatever was happening, I went along with everything. Whatever Chaitanya did — *whatever* — was okay with me. On my days I was constantly irritable. I spent most of the time bitching because Chaitanya wouldn't surrender to me even though it was 'my' day. It seemed so unfair.

In the ten days we played the game (or, at least, I played it), I discovered what Bhagwan and every other spiritual teacher is continually telling us. Surrender is bliss; life becomes so easy. Insisting on your own script is hell; it never works. The truth of it became abundantly clear; I experienced it existentially. I give up. Help! 'Thy will be done' — bliss.

A relationship around Bhagwan is unlike any other relationship. If the ashram itself is an encounter group, a love relationship is a more intense one. No holds barred. Everything goes.

When Chaitanya and I were in India together for the first time,

Bhagwan encouraged us to fight with each other. Physically, totally, authentically. Neither of us had ever fought before — we had both spent our lives being 'nice' and surrendering, at least on the surface, to others — but now suddenly, being given the licence to fight, all kinds of ugliness that we never knew were inside us began to emerge. We were out for blood; we *wanted* to hurt each other. Not only had neither of us ever fought before in our love relationships, but we had really never physically fought before in our lives. I can remember scratching and biting my sister when I was little, I was a hellcat when enraged, but if she had ever tried to hit me back I would have been terrified.

I lived in fear of physical harm. A ball coming at me on the baseball field and I ran away, until I finally learnt to catch in an effort to protect myself. Sports were a question of acquiring enough skill so that I wouldn't be physically hurt. A dog barking and I was traumatized. A loud noise and I jumped. A hand raised above me and I flinched and backed away — an invariable reaction that amused my children to no end and that they loved to test. 'I won't hit you, I promise, Mommy. Don't flinch.' They would raise their hand, I would flinch — they would laugh uproariously.

Not the most courageous person in the world to be sure. Hardly the kind to risk life and limb over some petty resentment. And Chaitanya wasn't much better. Boys are supposed to fight, but he had learnt early in life never to be in a situation where he had to. Maybe the fact that we're both Jewish accounts for it. We had never seen people fighting with each other. In our similarly repressed upbringing, we were taught that Jews didn't drink, they didn't fight; only the *goyim* did that. Distasteful. Disreputable. Not the kind of thing 'our' people did.

But suddenly we were together, with all our repressions and all our attitudes about what people like us didn't do, and Bhagwan was telling us to do it.

I would go to Bhagwan, my arms covered with black and blue marks. 'Mmmm, Satya,' he would say. 'How are you?' I would smile weakly at him and shrug my shoulders, trying to hold back my tears. 'And how is Chaitanya?'

With a dramatic flourish I would throw off the shawl I was wearing to cover my bruises. 'That's how he is,' I would sob self-pityingly, waiting, praying, for Bhagwan to tell me what a terrible person Chaitanya was, and that I should leave him immediately.

Instead, Bhagwan would laugh. 'Good, very good,' he would say. 'Go on fighting. Tell Chaitanya to hit you more,' and he would talk

about how true lovers were a mirror of one another.

If I couldn't be with Bhagwan for twenty-four hours a day, which I obviously couldn't be, it seemed pretty clear that I was supposed to be with Chaitanya — whether I wanted to be or not (and, at the time when we first began fighting, it was the last thing in the world I thought I wanted). If couples are fighting a lot Bhagwan usually suggests that they separate. 'If you're happy in a relationship', he says, 'you should stay in it. If you're unhappy, you should leave. Whether or not you're married is immaterial. Marriage is a social institution; it has nothing to do with love. Love should be the only criterion. If love is there, good. If there's only fighting, bitterness, unhappiness, then it's better to be apart.' But the more I would complain to him about Chaitanya, the more he would talk to me about surrender and about true love. That Chaitanya and I have a lot to work out with each other, and through each other, has become progressively clear to us both as the years have passed. It was obviously always clear to Bhagwan.

In many ways Chaitanya is my guru. In many ways I'm his. There have been times when I've thought I could live with anyone in the world *but* him. The very things I need most, or think I need, seem to be the very things he is least capable of giving me, or least willing to give. He refuses to support my neuroses.

Most love relationships seemed to be based on mutual affirmation and complementary neuroses. I'll tell you you're wonderful if you tell me I'm wonderful. I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch my back. Tit for tat. It has been the exact opposite with Chaitanya and me. We don't support each other; we expose each other. It's never comfortable or comforting. It's constantly being on the firing line. A continual war on every front.

Over the years I've watched myself loving him and hating him, and then falling in love with him again; and periods of indifference that were more agonizing than hate and occurred at least as regularly. What to do if you're sitting in a car with someone for hours on end, for days on end, and his every gesture is an affront to you? There is nowhere to go: a tunnel without exits; a coffin, too small for two souls. When you're travelling the way we did, there's no respite, no escape from the other.

But then, as unexpected as the hate or the indifference, the love would be there again. Hate and love are two polarities of the same emotion. Back and forth, in perpetual transition. In periods of love, the pendulum is gaining momentum to move towards hate, that is all. And vice versa.

After watching the movement long enough — watching it because I was trapped, there was nowhere to go, we were stuck together — it became more and more difficult to be identified with any one phase. I loved Chaitanya; inevitably, I would soon hate him. I hated him; inevitably, I would soon be loving him. Indifference? I learnt to sit and wait it out, knowing that sooner or later it would change. There was never any phoney trying-to-get-along, never any pretence. Everything was always right on the surface. There was nothing to do after a while but watch it. A continual ebb and flow, wax and wane that seemed, most of the time, to have nothing to do with us personally. A familiar, repetitive male/female see-saw that had been going on eternally.

The physical fighting was short-lived. When we got it out of our systems it was finished. The enraged energy, the energy of anger, was no longer suppressed inside either of us, as it had been for most of our lives. When we felt rage, we *felt* it. We knew it was there. Half the battle won. But it no longer had to come out in rage. It was pure energy — precipitated by anger, maybe, but purified by the consciousness of it. A pure energy that could be used for laughter, for meditation, for whatever it was we chose to use it.

Hatred comes as often as before. Always unexpectedly, always out of nowhere. But the periods of hate have become shorter and shorter. Until, now, they come and are gone in almost the same moment. A flash of anger or resentment or hatred that disappears so quickly I hardly even know it's there.

Once you are rid of the accumulated garbage of the past, so that old angers and old hatreds are no longer lurking beneath the surface waiting for an excuse to come out, anger becomes a momentary act, a sudden flare-up that burns itself out in an instant. If you're conscious of it, it changes direction before it can be manifested as anger. It's not sublimated or suppressed; it's transformed. It no longer has a history behind it, it's no longer the final straw in a lifetime of insults and disappointments.

The respectable citizen murders his wife with the bottled-up rage of a lifetime. People drink to mask their rage, they overwork to run away from it. As long as they can stay one step ahead of it they feel safe. They make war, they persecute minorities, they're ruthless in business, they self-righteously hate the liberals, they self-righteously hate the conservatives, they self-righteously hate the butcher who overcharges them. Hatred sputters out from them in small doses. Spread out widely enough it's safe; no one gets hurt too badly. Concentrated, and

someone gets maimed psychologically or physically: one's wife, one's child, one's neighbour, oneself.

Because Bhagwan's techniques get rid of the whole accumulation, anger ceases to be ugly, hate ceases to be ugly. It's no longer venom, it's anger. It's no longer hatred, it's hate. Nothing leads up to it, nothing follows it. As soon as it's there it's over, with no loose ends left behind. The more conscious you are of it, the quicker it goes.

Chaitanya does something to get me angry. I feel the anger in my body like a shot of adrenalin. The waves of pulsating calmness that either accompany my meditative states or *are* my meditative states (I've never been sure which) flood me. The upsurge of energy, the pulsating waves, the peace. It's impossible to be angry, even if I'm angry. I sink into my centre. Chaitanya no longer exists; I'm alone there.

The basic thing, I guess, is that I just can't take being angry seriously any more. If it comes out in anger, so what? In its own way, it's beautiful. If it doesn't come out in anger, if it makes me high instead, which I notice is happening more and more, then how to call it anger? Or hate, or whatever?

Bhagwan is always urging us to be authentic in whatever it is we do. 'Only if you can be angry authentically can you love authentically. Otherwise you become a hypocrite. When you're not feeling love you say, "I love you." The words become meaningless. All beautiful words have become meaningless. You "love" ice cream. A car is "magnificent". A movie is "divine". We can no longer understand what love is, what magnificence is, what the divine is, because we've dirtied these words through so much overuse.

'We use words to hide our feelings. We think that if we say, "I love you," we're expressing love; we're being loving. You can't love if you're filled with hate. The hate will always be there beneath the surface. You can love one person (or one group of people: your family, your nation, others of the same religion) and hate everyone else, or you can hate the same person that you love. In neither case is it love. While hate is there, love isn't possible. Love becomes just a matter of non-hate. It's not the presence of something; it's the absence of something. If you're not hating you think it's love, if you're not unhappy you think you're happy.'

Many people can't take the intensity of a relationship around Bhagwan. They want to run away and hide, not realizing that they're only running away from themselves. What each individual has to work out comes from within, not from without; from yourself, not from your

partner. If you're with someone you enjoy being with, you might as well stop and work it out right there. You can work it out with anyone, but if you keep running away from it, or keep blaming the other person, you'll never get a chance to. A love relationship, if it's an honest one, is a perfect opportunity to see yourself mirrored in the other. The master brings you up to his level; you see your highest possibility in him. A lover can bring you down to your lowest possible level, so that you can see that too.

Chaitanya doesn't let me escape from myself, and I don't let him escape. We're constant reminders to each other. We may be able to delude ourselves, but we can't fool each other. He knows every game I play, he knows how to push every button I have. The other is hell, if you don't want to see yourself. He or she is the intimate enemy if you would rather not be confronted by your unconscious motivations. But if you're trying to see yourself as you really are, so that you can grow towards who you can be, the other is a teacher, a guide, a guru.

Either Chaitanya grows more beautiful every day, or I grow more capable of seeing it. Maybe it's the same thing. Bhagwan says that since he has become enlightened he can see that everyone else is also enlightened. When your eyes grow more capable of seeing beauty, there's more beauty to see.

Wherever you see the divine is the place to begin. In an enlightened master, in your lover, in your child . . . in a flower, a tree, the stars, the moon. 'If you can't see the divine in your lover,' Bhagwan says, 'then you won't be able to see it anywhere. But if you can feel the divine in the other, then sooner or later you'll be able to feel it anywhere. Once the door has been opened, once you've had a glimpse of the divine through another person, then everyone becomes a door to the divine.'

'Love meditatively or meditate lovingly. Don't create any division between the two. If you can love deeply, love becomes the door to the divine just like any meditation technique. Love is the meditation. Feel reverence in the presence of your lover. Make your relationship sacred.'

And then, everything becomes sacred. You feel reverence for your shoes and reverence for a pebble on the road and reverence for your own being. It's the beginning and the end. The path and the destination. The impossible and the inevitable.

Food, sex and money

Food, sex and money are the three basics that almost everyone has some problem with. Bhagwan works with all three, exposing what is hidden so it can be got rid of.

A girl who had been into macrobiotics for a number of years came and took sannyas. One of the first things Bhagwan suggested that she do was eat a spoonful of white sugar every day. 'To a macrobiotic, sugar is the great sin and brown rice is the god. I'm against all fads. No rules should be imposed upon you from the outside, not even by yourself. All rules are stupid. Until you rid yourself of all shoulds and shouldn'ts, you can't reach a state of harmony within. When your body is functioning harmoniously, without any interference from the mind, you'll instinctively move to those things that are healthy for your body and avoid those things that are harmful. First get in touch with your body, become natural. Learn to listen to your body without interpreting its language according to your conditioning.

'I myself eat the same food day after day. Vivek gets worried cooking the same thing all the time. She always wants to try something new. But I've tried everything in my life. I know what suits me and what doesn't. Now I only eat what is good for my body. My body is different from every other body in the world. Your body is different from every other body in the world. Only by experimenting with everything can you come to know what suits you.

'So don't have any rules. They make you rigid, they don't allow you to flow. Let your body become attuned to its own rhythm and its own needs.'

Bhagwan loves to tell the story of when he first ate tomatoes as a child. He was brought up in a Jain household. Jains don't eat tomatoes because their pulp looks too much like meat, and meat is absolutely prohibited by them. He was at the house of a Muslim friend who tempted him to eat a tomato. He did, and became violently sick afterwards — vomiting, moaning with pain. 'Tomatoes are the most innocent

people!' he says. 'I love them! But the conditioned mind. . . .'

The macrobiotics around are mostly ex-macrobiotics by now. Not necessarily gorging themselves with chocolate-bars and ice cream, but not sticking to strict rules any more either. The body has to be healthy enough so that you can forget about it and move into a higher dimension, beyond the physical, but if you're preoccupied with the body you can never move beyond it. The body doesn't become a temple, it becomes a prison.

Maduri was attached to the idea of being skinny. This meant constant dieting, watching every bite of food she took. In meditation, all she could think about was food. She wanted to gorge herself, she wanted all the things she had deprived herself of for years. Bhagwan told her to eat a box of *barfi* (an Indian sweet made from boiled milk and sugar) every day, to stuff herself with it. The more she ate of it, the more she wanted. Her appetite grew, her lust for food grew. She watched people eat — she wanted to grab their food from them and devour it herself. She went through all kinds of trips: aggressive animal instincts came out, anger, greed. She got in touch with parts of her that hadn't been expressed, perhaps, in thousands of lifetimes.

The '*barfi* meditation' lasted for about a week. When it had done what it had to do, Maduri began to eat what she wanted to eat, when she wanted to eat it. Instead of being skinny, tense and suppressed, she began gaining weight; she became freer, looser — a more natural being. She became relaxed, happy, spontaneous. And more beautiful twenty pounds heavier than she had been before.

My own food-trips seem to be related to the fear of starvation, something I've only recently begun to be aware of. When I get very hungry, I get jittery; I begin to panic. And when I finally get something to eat, I wolf it down like an animal, not stopping for breath. It's a common reaction of people who are hypoglycemic. I've seen Sheela, Sarita and Prem react the same way: beginning to shake with the sudden need for sugar, a substitute for protein, the real need. Then the frantic, nervous stuffing of food into the body to take away the shaking, crying starvation of the cells.

No matter what the physiological basis of the reaction is, I have no doubt that it has some psychological or psychic counterpart. Maybe I didn't get enough milk from my mother's breast as an infant, maybe I starved to death once in a past life. The physical need causes the psychological panic. Perhaps the need is there so that the panic can be seen. Maybe our physical malfunctionings are techniques the trans-

migrating soul selects for itself in order to learn something. Maybe nothing is accidental: you're born with a weak heart or crippled body because you have something to learn through it. I'm hypoglycemic because it's the only way an affluent American will ever be forced to face the fear of starvation — which, perhaps, it's necessary for me to face. No matter how much I eat, I remain too thin to ever have to diet. If it wasn't for the hypoglycemia I might have to become an ascetic, fasting for months at a time, in order to experience starvation. My body provides the opportunity naturally, in continual, small doses.

Now that I am aware of this aspect of the preoccupation with food that I've had in India, and of the hypoglycemia that I've had since my first pregnancy, the hunger-shakes are becoming less frequent and my preoccupation with food is diminishing. I no longer sit in the lecture and think about the food from America that I miss. I don't over-stuff myself any more, I don't feel I have to eat even when I don't feel like eating. I wake up in the middle of the night: I'm starved — we haven't a thing in the room to eat. What will I do? I watch the feeling of panic that becomes shaking rise up in me. I go on watching it. Now that I can see the subtle panic that precedes the shaking, I can watch it from a distance. In watching, it subsides. The physical problem becomes a mental problem, and the mental problem vanishes with observation. The shaking doesn't happen. After a while I realize that the hunger itself has disappeared. My body regains its equilibrium, sufficient unto itself.

Physiologically, I suppose, it can be explained by the fact that in meditation the heart slows down, all the body-processes are reduced to a minimum. The body doesn't need as much sugar (or protein), so the shaking reaction doesn't happen. The relationship between body and mind is so subtle that a change in one will inevitably produce a change in the other. By becoming a healthy being, one acquires a healthier body. Illness, when it's there, is something to be used. It, too, becomes a gift. A continual technique, perhaps, for learning about non-attachment and non-identification. Being deeply rooted in the body without being attached to it, so that you can enjoy it to its fullest but are ready to leave it at any moment. . . .

I work in the ashram residents' canteen sometimes, as a break from too much mind-work. Serving food is a perfect opportunity to watch everyone's greed, and in watching others see the reflection of yourself. Some of the nicest people become the most unconscious and selfish when it comes to whether or not they'll get enough to eat. It's one

thing to be generous and considerate when you have an over-abundance, and another thing when you're afraid you may not have enough even for yourself. At one time the food budget for ashram residents was very meagre. If one person took too much, there wouldn't be enough for someone else. Everyone tried to make sure they got their share, often (if they could get away with it) by taking more than they wanted, or more than they needed. Food is one of the first attachments acquired. It seems to be one of the last to drop.

For a long time, the canteen seemed to be one of Bhagwan's favourite theatres of operation. When Chaitanya and I first moved to the ashram, the food was so bad that we were continually getting sick. We decided that we couldn't stay at the ashram unless we were allowed to cook for ourselves in our room. When we were told that we couldn't, we left and moved to a room a few blocks away. No sooner had we moved out than Sheela took over the canteen and the food became delicious. We began eating at the ashram, while sleeping somewhere else. It seemed ridiculous, so we moved back to the ashram. At which point (we should have expected it, I suppose), someone else took over the canteen and the food was worse than ever.

All of this wasn't happening specifically for Chaitanya and me, of course. Everyone else was going through their own unique reactions.

Sheela had a huge explosion after several weeks of trying to work with the hired non-sannyasin cook who had taken over for her as canteen manager. He was dishonest, he seemed to be unconcerned with even minimal health requirements, and he was arrogant. One day when he was being particularly outrageous about something, she blew up at him.

She went to darshan that night. Although she felt perfectly justified in having yelled at the cook, and on every realistic basis he deserved it, Bhagwan began scolding her. He seemed to deliberately misunderstand her when she tried to explain her side of the story. He wouldn't even listen to her; he was harsh with her.

She bowed her head, she accepted it. To surrender to Bhagwan she had to surrender to the cook. She surrendered to both.

It was a major breakthrough for Sheela. She became a different person. Softer, more yielding; accepting, flowing, rather than fighting. The tremendous amount of energy she has always had began moving in a positive direction.

Laxmi always laughs about the cook, as having been a deliberate technique for Sheela. She kept on stirring up trouble between them,

deliberately pitting them against each other, and invariably taking the cook's side in all disputes. Eventually Sheela would have to explode, as she finally did. And then, if she was ready for it, something could happen; a transformation could take place. It was a test. Bhagwan, no doubt, designed it, Laxmi directed it and the cook became the catalyst for Sheela's growth.

After which he was fired. Suddenly the cheating he had been doing all along became too much; he was asked to leave.

The canteen (which Sheela stopped working in at the same time; it was no longer the place for her to grow) got worse and worse, until there was no food- or health-trip left that we hadn't all gone through. So, it was time for a change.

Deeksha took over. The kitchen became clean, the food both healthy and delicious; there was nothing more one could ask for. But of course people continue to complain. The complaints are different now, but there are probably as many of them as before. A rich man has as many things to be dissatisfied with as a poor man. The dissatisfaction just moves in another direction. It becomes more subtle, but it's just as real. As long as the mind remains the same, nothing really changes.

No matter what Deeksha does, people will find something to complain about. It's a perfect situation for Deeksha and the people working with her to be constantly on the firing line. A perfect opportunity for them to confront negativity and be indifferent to it: a perfect meditation.

Most people have some kind of food-trip to work out. Everyone seems to have some kind of sex problem to work out. Nowhere in the world is sex treated naturally. 'You're born out of sex,' Bhagwan says. 'Every cell in your body is a sex cell. Sex is the most natural thing in the world, but from the very beginning we condemn it. A child explores his body. He touches his genitals — his hand is taken away, a subtle vibration is created that this is bad.

'In India we go on suppressing sex. In the West, sex is more accepted. But still, it is not treated as a natural phenomenon. People read how-to books on sex. It's ridiculous! Every animal knows how to have sex, it's not something that has to be taught. The overconcern with sex in the West and the overindulgence in it is as much an unnatural state of affairs as suppression. Both are extremes, both are diseased.

'Sex, if it's natural, has its own time and its own place. A person becomes sexual at around the age of fourteen. If he or she is allowed

to lead a natural sex-life, sex will drop by the age of forty-two. Biologically that's the correct timetable, but it never happens that way. We don't allow fourteen-year-olds to have sex. We force them to deny their sexuality, we teach them to sublimate it, to suppress it. By the time sex is allowed, it has begun to assume too much importance. It's no longer a natural life process: it's a preoccupation, a means by which people define themselves.'

People go on having sex until the day they die. Every old man is a dirty old man, because he still has so many unfulfilled sexual fantasies. Sex is beautiful, it has an animal vitality about it, a spontaneity, when a man is in his youth. In an old man it becomes ugly. The seventy-year-old who still leers at women, or the fifty-year-old who tries to hold on to his youth by holding on to his sexual prowess.

Now that women are becoming more sexually liberated, the same syndrome is happening in them. The ability to have an orgasm is the ultimate status symbol; it's the modern accompaniment to the traditional game of being sexually appealing. Women go on marketing themselves long after anyone is interested in buying the product. Women's lib hasn't changed that appreciably. It's only added some new refinements, and some new burdens.

Before I took sannyas I was as busy exploiting myself as a sex-object as the next person, while at the same time trying to deny that that was what I was doing. I managed to look sexy without looking as though I was trying to. I was liberated enough not to want to play the game, and clever enough to know how to play it according to my own rules.

Then I started wearing orange clothes. At first it was orange jeans and orange turtleneck sweaters, but once I came to India I began wearing long, flowing, essentially sexless robes. It felt wonderful to be naked underneath a long robe that hid my nakedness, so that I could enjoy the freedom of it without outraging anyone. Indian *sadhus* go around naked, one can see them everywhere. But a woman from the West can hardly do the same thing unless she wants to get arrested or committed to a mental institution. Wearing long, loose robes is the perfect disguise for nakedness. Others see the robe. You yourself experience the freedom of the nakedness beneath it.

I notice that it's only when I've felt insecure that I've gone back, briefly, to trying to look sexy. It has been a symptom of a feeling of unworthiness. 'Tell me I look beautiful so I'll feel beautiful inside.' 'Desire my body so I'll think that you love me, so I'll feel worth loving.'

But when you're out of the trip once and for all, when you've finally

finished with the mutually exploitative game, the man-made law of the jungle (surely a contradiction in terms?), it's an incredible relief. Nine-tenths of our sexual appetites seem to be something else: a need for affirmation; a need for love, for attention; an acting out of fantasies. The more I've seen how much my sexual needs haven't had anything to do with sex, the more the needs have diminished. Sex is a minute part of life. We make it into the most important part because we have so little else that can take us beyond the tedium of our day-to-day lives. Sex is an attempt to merge ourselves with the other, and, through the other, to merge ourselves with the whole. Meditation is another attempt: a more successful one, since the effects last so much longer. It's a growth into greater and greater ecstasies, not simply a repetitive pattern that never goes beyond itself.

Bhagwan says that people come to him with thousands of problems but that 99 per cent of those problems can be reduced to sex. If someone is sexually suppressed he may suggest that they move into sex freely, with many partners. If someone is promiscuous, moving from one partner to the next, he may suggest that they remain with one person. If they have a very active sex-life with one partner, he may suggest that they limit sex now to once a week, but use their sexual energy throughout the remainder of the week to move into love, a six-day prelude to the sex act. 'When sex happens after six days of loving, after six days of waiting, the energy will be so much that you'll explode with it. It will be a total orgasm of the body, a peak that will take you spontaneously into meditation.'

As Bhagwan explains it, there are four natural stages of sexuality: auto-sexuality, homosexuality, heterosexuality and transcendence. Each of these stages, he tells us, corresponds to a stage of love: love of the self, love of those similar to oneself, love of those opposite to oneself and love of the whole. Each stage must be passed through and transcended. Each forms the base upon which the next stage develops.

The problem is, of course, that we suppress sex at each stage, so that no phase of the natural process is gone through totally. And whatever has been left unfinished remains behind, distorting one's subsequent sexual development.

We don't allow young children to explore their bodies freely and enjoy them. In the period from seven to fourteen, when their interest in members of the same sex is natural, we don't allow that natural attraction to have any sexual, exploratory manifestations. When heterosexuality develops naturally at the time of puberty, we don't allow any

outlet for it. So everyone remains fixated at one stage or another — or, to some degree, at every stage. But until each stage is passed through and completed, one can't come to the final stage: a merging of the male and female energy within oneself, a union between oneself and the whole. 'Only then', Bhagwan says, 'does authentic prayer happen. To be prayerful is to be in love, in love with the whole of existence.' A transcendence of sexuality and the urge to dissolve oneself into another: the urge, instead, to dissolve oneself into the whole.

Bhagwan talks about homosexuality as a perversion, a distortion, an immaturity, yet he also urges people to be authentic, to accept themselves as they are. For some, this means accepting homosexual desires that they may or may not have admitted to themselves. I remember one man who, in the course of an encounter group, was told to wear a sign around his neck saying: 'I'm a homosexual'. There, out in the open: I am who I am.

I also remember a girl who had written a note to Bhagwan — very private, very secret — about being homosexual. She sat in front of Bhagwan at darshan the following night. 'You got my letter?' she asked shyly.

'How long have you been a lesbian?' he asked, proclaiming for all the world the secret she was so ashamed of. She buried her head in her hands. Nothing is secret, nothing is private, there's nothing to be ashamed of.

Because there's no fear of homosexuality here, because it's not condemned, the relationships between members of the same sex are very open and loving. Two women, or two men, can be physically affectionate to each other without any societal judgments. I don't think I ever really hugged another woman until I met sannyasins. I remember hugging Mukta for the first time. She felt like a little sparrow. I had never hugged another adult before who wasn't twice my size. Or hugging Big Prem, who is twice my size but soft and billowing as only a woman can be. We all come from a mother and a father. We all want, and need, affection from both of them. But then we grow older. If we're male, we aren't supposed to want affection from another male. The only way to fulfil what is a perfectly natural desire is to become homosexual, or bisexual. The need to feel loving and loved gets translated into sexual terms when it has nothing to do with sex at all. Because Bhagwan gives us the freedom to love — 'All love is good, irrespective of the object; love is the supreme good' — sex doesn't enter into a place where it doesn't belong. If I need to be comforted,

it doesn't matter whether Chaitanya comforts me or whether Big Prem does. I don't have to be afraid: 'Oh God, a woman is hugging me and I like it. What does it *mean*?' It doesn't mean anything. It is what it is.

It's lovely just to see people around the ashram being affectionate with one another. Members of the same sex, members of the opposite sex, couples, one's lover with one's best friend. People are natural and spontaneous in their affections. It's all right to feel love for anyone. I've never been anywhere before in my life where people have been so free to love. And because of the freedom, there's no sexual connotation to every action. Sex is one thing, love is something entirely different. There's less of a tendency here to confuse the two, or to misinterpret one as the other.

In the growth movement, being loving has become a *should*: 'Act loving and you'll begin to feel loving'. At the ashram, it's not a forced freedom that creates its own distortions; people don't go around hugging each other because it's the thing to do or part of the scene. The love-ins of the growth movement, and the expansive oneness-with-existence philosophy of the spiritual movement, are as phoney as the suppressed condition they're an attempt to rectify. It's starting from the outside; it just becomes another conditioning.

Here, the expression of love comes because the feeling of love is there. One grows in one's ability to love. The expression follows the growth; it's spontaneous. An overflowing not an act. An outgrowth not a technique.

As one grows into love more — by getting rid of all the things that prevent one from loving — one moves to the next stage in the process. The homosexual moves beyond homosexuality and the heterosexual moves beyond sex.

If one has homosexual desires, there's no need to deny them; but there's as much of a tendency to be stuck in homosexuality as there is to refuse to acknowledge it. Once someone becomes 'a homosexual' he is labelled, both to himself and others. Bhagwan may suggest a tantric technique to a homosexual couple — letting the energy flow from one partner to the other, feeling a circle of energy moving between them — the same technique that he would give to a heterosexual couple — but if someone is ready to move beyond homosexuality, he encourages it.

'Homosexuality is a disease,' he says. 'There's nothing wrong with it, as far as it goes it's beautiful, but still I say it's a disease. It's functioning at a very immature level of development. One has to eventually move beyond it into heterosexuality, and eventually beyond that into

the transcendence of sex. Each stage should be used to take you to the next stage. Whatever stage you're at, there's nothing to be condemned about it. But use it to move beyond.'

Only by moving through sex can authentic celibacy happen. Bhagwan speaks often against an artificially imposed celibacy: 'Your so-called saints and monks who dream about sex and whose so-called meditations are disturbed by sexual fantasies. . . .'

The first time I came to India, Chaitanya remained back in the States. I was practising a tantric meditation technique that awakened a lot of sexual energy. Invariably, at some point, the energy would get to be too much and I would long for a male partner. I would call out for Chaitanya, I would call out for Bhagwan.

Finally I went to see Bhagwan about it. He suggested that I have sex with H, whom I was friendly with but felt no sexual attraction towards. 'Chaitanya is not here,' he said. 'It's not good to be attached to someone who is not here. If he is not here, it's as if he doesn't exist. It will be good to be with H. It will help you to get over your attachment to Chaitanya.'

H, I knew, had been celibate for five years. How to have sex with someone who felt that he had gone beyond sex? But finally, inevitably, it happened. And it was a powerful technique for both H and me, each in our own way.

From my side, I stopped longing for a male during my meditations. I saw how the energy could move upwards more easily if I was by myself. With a partner, what started out as sex energy remained body-oriented and sexual. Working with this same energy by myself, it ceased to be sexual and moved upwards into meditation. I didn't need a male, or a sexual orgasm, to move into the dissolving of the self and of the ego that we normally only experience in sex. My need for Chaitanya, and consequently much of my attachment to him, diminished. I was more able to be where I was, without a part of me always longing to be somewhere else.

While for H, the experience brought his five-year celibacy to an end. For about two years after that he seemed to revert to the opposite extreme: moving from one female to another, until he finally settled down with one woman. When celibacy is authentic it comes about naturally, as a result of having transcended sex. When it's not authentic it becomes another perversion. Like the priest who molests choir-boys, the monk who flagellates himself or the nun whose denial of her sexual needs makes her stern, judgmental and unloving.

Sex can turn into love, and love can turn into meditation. When nothing is denied, the progression happens naturally. The higher comes out of the lower: the animal becomes a man becomes a god. Sex is natural to all animals, love is natural to all men and meditation is natural to those who would be more than men, who would be gods.

And money. The stumbling block for those who aren't caught in the trap of food and sex, and for many who are. It's a substitute for many things, it creates endless dramas around which endless problems are intensified, or, near Bhagwan, resolved.

A rich man came to Ramakrishna, bringing with him five bags of gold that he wished to give as a gift to the enlightened master. 'I'm sorry,' Ramakrishna said, 'but I have no need of gold. Take it back. It's of no use to me.'

The rich man was offended. He insisted. Finally, Ramakrishna consented to the gift. 'The gold is mine now?' he asked.

'Yes, yes, of course.'

'And I can do anything I want with it?'

'Yes, of course. I give it to you with no strings attached. I ask for nothing in return.'

Ramakrishna nodded. 'Then you do me one favour,' he said. 'Take the bags of gold down to the river for me and throw them into the river. I have no need for gold. That is what I choose to do with it. Will you do that for me?'

The man was shocked. He had expected gratitude, he had expected the master's blessings. This was too much! But nothing could be done about it — he had agreed that the money belonged to Ramakrishna and that he was free to do whatever he liked with it — so the man took the five bags of gold down to the river.

An hour passed, two. Still the man didn't return from the river. After another hour had passed and the man still had not come back from the river, Ramakrishna went down to the river himself to see what had happened to him.

And there the man was, taking each coin out of the bag one at a time, kissing it goodbye and then, with a sad look on his face, throwing it into the river.

Ramakrishna laughed. 'Why do you throw it away like that?' he asked. 'If the gold is to be thrown away, then throw it away! Be done with it! Throw it all at once. Only then can you yourself be thrown.'

Masters commonly use money as a medium for their work because

so many people are attached to it. Gurdjieff used to ask people to pay him \$100 just to answer one question. Sometimes he would answer it just by a yes or a no. And if you wanted another question answered, he would charge you another \$100. If money was your god he would make you give it up before he would even talk to you. A false god has to be sacrificed before an authentic god can be seen.

Money isn't important for itself; it's important for what it symbolizes. The master takes with one hand and gives away with the other.

When we used to show movies of the ashram to people in the West, invariably they would ignore everything else and comment on the fact that Bhagwan lived in a nice house and wore an expensive watch. His life is, in fact, incredibly simple. He lives in one room, which he only leaves twice a day, to be with his disciples; he wears the same few robes and the same pair of sandals day after day, year after year; he owns nothing and accumulates nothing. People's concern with Bhagwan's presumed (but not real) affluence, or the ashram's real (not presumed) extravagance, show something not about Bhagwan or about the ashram but about themselves. Their own fixations, their own miserliness, their own greed.

There was a period when lots of people were buying watches for Bhagwan. He had given them so much; they wanted to give him something in return. But what? He owned nothing, he wanted nothing, he needed nothing. He did wear a watch though. Perhaps they could buy him a new one?

People tried to outdo one another in the extravagance of the watch they bought for Bhagwan, each a watch to end all watches. But virtually as soon as a new watch would arrive, Bhagwan would give it away. As often as not, to a person whom the buyer of the watch particularly disliked. It was a devastating trip to have to work through. It forced the people involved to see the attachment they had to their giving. Only rarely do we give without any strings attached. We want to be appreciated, acknowledged; we want a certain amount of ego-affirmation for our supposed generosity. Bhagwan won't give it. The acceptance of the gift is a technique, a gesture. It has no meaning in and of itself.

When Heeren decided spontaneously, in the middle of an encounter group, to donate all his money (£100,000) to the ashram, he was invited to move into the ashram even though he had only recently taken sannyas. Everyone said, 'Oh well, of course. He's giving all that money. Laxmi *has* to give him a room.' He began working at the ashram, he was incorporated into the ashram family.

Because of a variety of legal problems, Heeren wasn't able to donate the money, and very likely never will be able to. But it's immaterial. It was the sudden, total surrender, symbolized by the offered donation, that made him ready to move into the ashram, not the money itself.

Money is often the means through which parents attempt to control the lives of their children. D, for example, wants to donate money to the ashram. But his mother, to whom he gave power of attorney when he first came to India, won't release the money. She is most angered, it seems, because he made the decision on his own, without asking for her advice.

If he went back to America to try to get the money himself, he would have to deal with his mother's attempt to manipulate him, something she has probably spent his whole lifetime doing. My feeling is that he hasn't been asked to go back for the money because he isn't ready yet to face his mother as an autonomous, self-sufficient adult. And that if he is ever sent back — ostensibly to 'get the money for the ashram' — it won't be because of the money itself, but because it's time he faced his mother in such a context, in order to free himself of her influence and control. Dependencies exist on many subtle levels. More often than not, they're submerged beneath something else. In affluent families, that something else is often money.

Many of us at the ashram have been fairly well off for most of our lives. It has been easy for us to be charitable, generous, philanthropic. We had more than we needed — what else to do with it but share it? Now that few of us have more than a minimal amount of money any more, however, it's less easy to be generous. We begin to see how much we're *not* generous, how much we want to cling to the little we still have.

I had never had to face my own miserliness before, because I was always very open-handed with money. What's mine is yours. But now that 'what's mine' won't even be enough for small luxuries for Chaitanya and me for much longer, I watch myself growing tight and cautious. It's something I never would have seen if I still had a great deal of money.

I had thought I was Buddha-like in my generosity. I see I'm not. When the ashram finally accepted my money — which I had continually offered, only to be told time and time again by Laxmi, 'No, you keep it. When we need it, we'll ask for it. You hold on to it for now' — I was suddenly placed in a situation where I could begin to see my tightness. Before that, having money and not being able to give it away as I wanted to do, I was forced to face the opposite aspect of my money-

trip: the burden of having money when others don't, the guilt in the face of the inherent unfairness of it.

People who have money have one sort of money-trip to work through. People who don't have money have another sort. Laxmi (and the ashram) not taking my money during all the years that the giving of it would have been a relief to me and a subtle ego-gratification, and then finally accepting it, created an opportunity for me to work through both the money-trip of the affluent and the money-trip of the person who is struggling to make ends meet. Soon I won't have any money left. It seems like the easiest state of all. Somehow existence provides. Everything that you get becomes a gift. Nothing is expected; everything is received with gratitude.

When one finally finishes with food/sex/money, what is left? Just the ego, unadorned. Regardless of how many things have dropped, regardless of how much easier life has become, regardless of all the ways one has changed and grown, one is still as far away from enlightenment as ever. There is no such thing as a diminished ego. While the mind is there, while the ego is there, it's the same old mind, the same old ego.

Laxmi, Bhagwan's secretary, seems to me to be the closest one can get to being enlightened without actually being enlightened. Yet when her mind comes in, or her ego comes in, she is no different from anyone else. Inside herself she may be more aware of what's happening, she may be better able to watch the ego play its games than most, but it goes on playing them. The difference between Laxmi and me, or Laxmi and the bus driver from Cleveland who beats his wife on Sundays, is a difference of degree. She functions from a pure space, without the ego, more often than I do or the bus driver does, but when the ego comes back again, it's as self-protective and self-deluding as anyone else's.

One can grow more and more beautiful, more and more blissful, one can break the chains of conditioning, the chains of food/money/sex, but until the ego dies completely and there's no longer any separation between the self and the whole — one can no longer say 'I' yet one can say, 'I'm the whole, I'm God' — the journey hasn't ended. Each day is a new beginning. A new chance to reach that which you already are.

Maduri asked Bhagwan if Werner Erhard (the founder of *est*) was close to being enlightened. He answered: 'As close as Maduri is. Until you're enlightened, you're as far away as anyone else. It can happen in an instant from wherever you are. And however close you seem to be, it may take lifetimes. Until it happens, until you've dissolved completely,

you're no different from anyone else.

'The danger is — and it happens all the time — that once you've reached a certain level, you *seem* to be different. Others become attracted to you. They begin to worship you, they become your followers. Unless you're absolutely alert and aware, that can be the greatest trap of all. You become stuck where you are — so close and yet an infinite distance away.

'That's the time when a master is needed the most. To prevent you from falling into the trap of your own realizations. They're not ultimate yet, they're not the final state. But they can be so beautiful, the ego can be so affirmed by them, that you lose sight of the greater possibility that's still ahead of you.

'The closer you are, the more a master is needed, because it becomes more difficult than ever to do anything on your own. The ego becomes very subtle. A master is needed to destroy you absolutely, to shatter you completely. Only then can enlightenment happen to you.'

Part 1102

INTRODUCTION TO PART THREE

Reading over Parts One and Two of this manuscript, I see that it's all irrelevant, obsolete. So much has happened since I wrote it. Beautiful things, painful things, absurd dramas. Everything is different now. The ashram is three times the size it was six months ago, there are twice as many activities and groups. Even the celibates of many years are with lovers again. It was inconceivable six months ago. Now it seems like the most natural thing in the world.

How to write the truth when everything changes so quickly here? What's true never seems to be true for more than a moment. Only Bhagwan remains as he was: at ease with opposites, containing contradictions, merging the disparate.

Life goes on changing, evolving. Words become fixed. They're dead the minute they're spoken, the minute they're written. What starts out as fact ends up as fiction because it's just a selection of the whole, a part of it. The part, masquerading as the whole, made permanent, real, by the writing down of it, distorts the truth; it becomes a lie.

Maneesha, the 'ashram bard' who writes the commentaries to the twelve darshan diaries that are published every year, wrote to Bhagwan recently saying that the more filled she felt by him, the less she was able to write about him. The more there was to share, the less she was able to write it, to share it. 'Superficial feelings can be expressed easily,' Bhagwan answered. 'Words are adequate for them. But deeper feelings can't be expressed adequately. When the feeling goes deep, it can't be put into words. You can try, but you'll always feel that you've failed. When you put it in words something very tiny comes out, and it was so huge when you experienced it. When you were feeling it, it was an ocean. When you go to put it into words it becomes a drop.

'But go on trying to express what you're feeling,' he continued, 'because even if it can't be expressed it *has* to be expressed. Even if you can't put the ocean of your heart into your words, it's nothing to be worried about. Even a few drops will be good, because even those few

will lead people to me, even those few drops will give them a taste of the ocean. It may be small, but it has the same flavour, the same secret as the whole ocean. If someone can understand a single drop of water, he will be able to understand water wherever he finds it, wherever he sees it.'

So I go on trying. Nothing I've written about Bhagwan or about the ashram or about myself is the truth. It's only a momentary definition that is negated by the facts as soon as it's written down. But it can't be helped. I've got this far. Through my contradictions, my inaccuracies, my hints, my inability to express the vastness of the phenomenon here, maybe *something* has been communicated, shared. Maybe it will be enough. For you to come. For you to see for yourself. For you to discover, here, your own truths.

Satoris

Bhagwan has been speaking recently about people at the ashram having satori experiences. The experiences sound like the kinds of things that used to happen to me fairly frequently. I never paid too much attention to them. They were beautiful gifts, blessings, but nothing that one could talk about. I never even told Bhagwan about them; I thought he must know. The master might not know that you had a toothache, or were getting an abortion, or were fighting with your husband, but surely these things — the inner happenings, the earthquakes of the consciousness — the master must know about without being told.

Satoris change one utterly; something from them seems to remain behind long after the period of euphoria has past. But they're just a glimpse of the beyond, of that state that we were all meant to live in: our own Buddhahood. Bhagwan says that the difference between satori and samadhi is that satoris are just a glimpse; one comes back. Samadhi is a permanent state. The old is no more, the past has dropped completely. One is no longer an 'I', an ego. One has become lost into the whole; there's no returning.

The danger, when satoris happen, is that people get fooled by them. Because they've had a glimpse of something, they think they're living it. They think they've arrived when they've only momentarily visited. They think the journey has ended when it has just begun.

Werner Erhard talks about a satori experience, an experience of knowing, of enlightenment, illumination, revelation, that happened to him when he was sitting in a car in California. Suddenly reality became real to him. He could see; he knew. Out of that experience, he developed and built and mass-marketed a program to help others experience a similar moment of knowing (the *est* trainings). But then what? If the *est* experience becomes the beginning of a search that leads to higher and higher awareness, that leads, finally, ultimately, to enlightenment, then it has served its purpose. But if it becomes the end — if one feels that now one *knows* — it becomes a block. There's nowhere to go,

nothing to do; but we're not living that realization until we've become enlightened ourselves. Otherwise it's just words, theory, another person's truth. Even if that other person is you. Before. Once. A momentary realization can become a pattern of functioning, a knowing can become a conditioning. Then a moment of truth leads to a lifetime of self-deception. Wings turn to lead; they solidify. The memory of flight becomes an excuse to lie back and dream.

Last March, on the eve of Bhagwan's enlightenment day, I stayed up all night dancing on the roof, and afterwards 'understood the universe' with absolute clarity. If I had decided to devise a system out of it, it might have been a physics of great complexity, which I could have spent the rest of my life trying to validate by mathematical formulation or philosophical argumentation. Many people do that. It's the way of the scientist, the artist, the deviser of systems such as Werner Erhard. They spend their lives making concrete and communicable what was revealed to them in a moment of subjective knowing. The rational mind comes in. The mystical experience is reduced to the comprehensible. One writes formulas instead of dancing. One creates precision and structure out of chaos. One loses oneself in it. The mystery of life, out of which the experience itself has come, is lost.

Maybe because Bhagwan is always warning us about these things — he is always telling us to drop our experiences; to enjoy them, but not to cling to them — I was content with the experience itself. I celebrated it rather than trying to analyse it. There was no need to share it with anyone else; it was enough to know it. Whether it could be proven or not was immaterial. Whether it was true was immaterial. It was my own truth: for the time being anyway. Till something else came along to replace it, modify it, expand it.

A master leads one into these experiences and then does everything he can to help you to drop them. He is there to shatter your dreams. Even if the dreams are of enlightenment, of realization, of bliss. He is there to take away even your illusions of awakening. He shows you that you're still asleep. Only then can he help you to truly awaken. Not to dream that you're awake, but to awaken. The master is there as a constant reminder that you haven't yet attained all that is possible, that there's more to come. That your experience, however beautiful it has been, is just an experience, something to be dropped, dismissed. It's just so much excess baggage on the journey that still lies ahead. Empty ballast to be discarded. Rubbish.

Over the last few years, I've had scores of 'spiritual experiences'. Too

many to count, or even think about. But four of them were different from the others. They weren't just experiences; they were mutations. I was a different person after each of them. I suppose one could call them satoris, or mini-satoris. They were certainly *something*. That-which-has-no-words.

The first one happened about six months before I took sannyas. I had gone for the weekend up to Samarpan, the ashram in upstate New York that Mukta had recently started. In the meditation room, there was a cast of Bhagwan's feet which had been made, I had been told, according to some esoteric science so that Bhagwan's vibrations emanated from it. I thought this was the most absurd thing I had ever heard. But despite what I thought, it was impossible to deny the power of the vibrations one felt as soon as one entered the meditation room where the 'feet' were kept. There was a potent presence in the room that made me suddenly feel calm and tranquil. Silent, but energized.

The three or four of us who were at Samarpan that weekend decided to do Dynamic Meditation. The deep, fast breathing of the first stage of the technique always brought me to a state of pain, of catharsis, a state of revelation, in several minutes, but this time nothing happened. I continued breathing. The second stage started. Still no catharsis. I kept on breathing, wondering what had gone wrong. The third stage. I threw my whole body, my whole energy, into the shouting of the *hoos*. 'Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!' The energy built up to a peak, a climax. I felt as if I was going to explode.

Suddenly there was light all around me. Inside my head, outside. A bright, dazzling, blinding light. Through the heavy blindfold I was wearing, through my closed eyes, it flooded me. Continuing the *hoos*, I moved closer and closer to the light until I seemed to dissolve into it. Tears ran down my face. 'My God, my God, oh my God.' It was so beautiful, the most beautiful thing I had ever seen, excruciatingly beautiful.

I was at the window, my head pressed against the pane. The light — how to talk about it? It was bliss, it was ecstasy, it was everything I hadn't believed was possible before.

The fourth stage of the technique: the meditation. I remained standing, my forehead pressed against the window, tears pouring down my face. I stood there for half an hour, maybe more. Then I collapsed, tears still flowing out of me from nowhere. Hours passed, it grew dark outside. I was filled from within with light.

The darkness that had always been inside my forehead whenever I

closed my eyes was suddenly transformed into light, a dazzling brightness. The experience was overwhelming. But somehow it wasn't totally new to me. I remembered it from before, I remembered living in this light constantly when I was young. Then it had gone — how? why? — not coming back again until that day.

The bliss of the experience left after a few days, but the light remained. Whenever I close my eyes it's still there. Calming me. Reminding me of bliss. Sustaining me.

The next experience/explosion/satori was when I first took sannyas.* I laughed and laughed for hours. A cataclysmic experience that left me with the gift of laughter, so that never again have I been able to take anything in life entirely seriously, not even my own anguish. After the bliss of the experience left, the laughter remained behind. Sometimes hiding deep inside me, but always there somehow, waiting for an opportunity, an excuse to be released.

These first two experiences seemed to recapture something for me that I had known once before — Godlight and laughter — but had lost in the process of growing up. My third experience turned me into someone totally new. Or, perhaps, someone I had been before, but so long before that it had preceded my birth.

It was my first meditation camp, six months after I took sannyas, and two and a half months after I first arrived in Bombay to be with Bhagwan. Bhagwan had told me before the camp that I was to accept whatever was going to happen to me during the camp; that I should go crazy, I should be in a total let-go.

There were three meditation sessions at these early camps. Bhagwan was present during each of them. He also lectured twice a day, for an hour and a half in the morning and an hour and a half at night. Nothing existed during the ten days of the camp except Bhagwan and the meditations and one's own inner battles.

And the sun. Which at that particular camp — at Anand Shila, a short distance from Bombay — was particularly potent and brutal, and played, no doubt, a significant part in the experiences I went through.

Each meditation and each day was more intense than the one before it. The energy built up in me and in all of us. An explosion, perhaps, was inevitable.

I lay for hours in deathlike stupor. Deep meditation? Heat prostration? It didn't matter what it was. It was blissful beyond description.

*See Chapter 3.

I danced exuberantly when I wanted to dance, I sang sweet sounds that had never come from my throat before, I laughed and laughed hilariously, I cried in anguish and wept in bliss. I did Dynamic Meditation in front of Bhagwan and suddenly, in the midst of the *boos*, the most incredible orgasm I had ever experienced rushed through me. The bliss was more intense than anything I had ever experienced before. It was almost too much for the body to take.

And after that, the deepest, quietest sense of being. A stillness within myself that has remained since then, regardless of whatever chaos may be happening to me on the periphery. For the duration of the camp I was in love with the world. With rocks, with trees, with everyone I saw. When I went back to America, a few days after the camp ended, there was a newness in everything I did and thought and felt. A freshborn stillness. An unaccustomed peace.

Between each of these experiences there were scores of other happenings that were dramatic, out of the ordinary, intensely blissful; but there was something different about these, a difference that I was never actually conscious of at the time but only became aware of later on. These particular events, unlike the others, left me with a permanent legacy. It was as though grace descended upon me in these moments. The ego might come back again later (as it invariably did), I might be wallowing in my own waste a week later or a month later, but underneath it all the gifts were still there, they're still there.

I seem to remember it so rarely. I take it for granted; I forget to feel grateful. Bhagwan answered a question of mine during a lecture a couple of years ago. In the question I had spoken about how beautiful it was to be out of the body. 'I often think', I had written, 'how nice it would be to die.'

'Nice?' Bhagwan replied. I remember how he said the word. With such scorn. With such mockery. 'Nice' — saying the word as if it was distasteful even to utter it — 'means a life of vegetation: doing nothing and getting everything, receiving everything without making any effort. How ungrateful you are. You've received so much without doing anything for it, but gratitude never arises. Rather, on the contrary, the idea of suicide arises. Suicide is the greatest complaint that you can lodge against God and the existence. Have you thought about it in that way? You're saying to God that the life he's given you is not worth living; you're ready to leave it.'

I had thought at the time that he had misunderstood what I was saying, that he was answering the question in general and not specifically

to me. I wasn't talking about suicide; I was talking about my out-of-the-body experiences. I only meant that I was ready to die, that I wasn't afraid of death any more. Bhagwan, I was sure, was just using my question to talk to other people about themselves. After all, I'm not ungrateful. He couldn't mean *me*.

But of course he did. He was trying to show me something about myself, but I rejected it rather than seeing it. I found excuses. He goes on trying to help us, to show us, to force us to look at ourselves, while we go on playing cunning tricks of self-deception that fool no one.

It has taken me all these years to see how ungrateful I am. I look at what I don't have rather than what I have, what I've been given. Instead of being grateful for the gift I received yesterday, I feel rejected because I didn't receive anything today. I remember every pain I've ever suffered, I forget my joys. When I remember them at all it's only with sadness — that they're gone.

When Bhagwan gives me a gift — a special look, special attention, special privilege — I pretend to be blasé about it, my ego pretends not to feel gratified. I pretend a sophistication that's as false as it is absurd. I try to be grown up, above it all, beyond caring. Because I don't want others to feel badly about not having received what I've been given, I pretend it hasn't been given. The wonder of life is lost. The bountiful gift received without thanksgiving.

So many remarkable things have happened to me since I took sannyas. Not because of me, but in spite of me. Despite my resistances, despite my fears, despite my unworthiness. My every breath should be a thanksgiving, not an accusation. How can I help but see it? How can I help but be grateful? I remove the cataracts from my eyes. I look. I see. While I'm writing this, tears flow down my face in sudden, profound gratitude.

'Life is effort,' Bhagwan says, 'but it is good. Through effort you grow, you mature. If there is nothing to worry about, you'll simply vegetate. How will you grow? Struggle is needed to make you more alive; struggle gives you sharpness. Through struggle you create the capacity to see and feel and hold on to the bliss that is achieved. Pain and discomfort and frustration give you the opportunity to grow. They are great blessings.

'People ask me why there is so much suffering if God is compassion. God is compassion, *therefore* there is so much suffering. Unless you pass through suffering you will not reach the ultimate ecstasy. It is a basic training. Unhappiness is a basic training for the ultimate

flowering of happiness. You can't come to the ultimate ecstasy unless you've been thrown into the ultimate agony.

'... Until a fish is taken out of the water, he doesn't know what water is, the bliss of it. If the fish is thrown back into the sea, he won't be the same fish he was before. The very thing that was taken for granted before will become his ecstasy now. A child lives in innocence, but he doesn't know the bliss of it. He has to lose his innocence, and then regain it, before he learns its worth. Adam has to be thrown out of the Garden of Eden before he can become a Christ.'

There's a Sufi story that Bhagwan tells about a rich man who was in search of happiness. He was ready to give up everything for it. He put all his gold in huge bags and set out in search of someone who could help him find happiness. He went to teacher after teacher, promising each of them the reward of his wealth if they could help him to find the secret. He came away from each empty handed.

Finally he came to a dervish, a Sufi master. 'Tell me,' he said, 'can you help me find happiness? I will give you all my gold if you can help me.'

Without saying a word, the Sufi jumped up, grabbed the man's bags of gold and ran off with them. The man was enraged. What kind of nonsense was this? This was supposed to be an enlightened master? He was no better than a common thief. 'Help, help!' the man shouted. 'I've been robbed! I've been robbed!' He ran after the dervish, he was frantic.

But the dervish was good at running and clever at hiding. The man couldn't find him. He became sad, desolate. Finally, in tears, he returned to where he had left his donkey — where he had first met the dervish.

And there the dervish was, sitting under the same tree as before, the man's bags of gold lying exactly where they had been before. The man began to weep with joy.

'How could you have done this terrible thing to me?' he asked the Sufi when he was finally able to speak again. 'I was beside myself. I was absolutely miserable.'

'And you are happy now?' the Sufi asked. The man nodded.

The Sufi smiled. 'Then I have shown you how to find happiness.'

Suffering brings its own rewards. Innocence regained is more than innocence. Out of every valley rises the peak.

My fourth experience/explosion emerged out of a feeling of deep

frustration, a feeling of helplessness and hopelessness. It changed me so much that I could label my life 'Before the Happening' and 'After the Happening'. Afterwards I called it 'this thing that happened to me', 'a kind of explosion'.

The experience was so intense it felt as if it would kill me. I backed away from it. I let it go so far and no further. I allowed it to happen and then, in sudden fear, didn't allow it to happen. But even it's not-happening was a profound event. If I had allowed it, it might have destroyed me completely. It would have been my death and my resurrection. But I was afraid. Afraid, perhaps, of too much bliss, afraid of dying too completely, afraid of my own possibility for unending ecstasy.

It was at a meditation camp held in Mt Abu, shortly before Bhagwan moved to Poona. The previous meditation camps I had been to had been very powerful for me. This one wasn't. I couldn't get into any of the meditations; nothing was happening to me. I felt like a failure, a has-been. I had had my chance often enough before, but I had blown it. I had experienced bliss and then lost it. I was beyond redemption, closed, invulnerable; nothing could penetrate me any more. I hated myself and everyone around me.

Then one afternoon, half way through the camp — I was alone in my bedroom, lying on the bed — suddenly, apropos of nothing, my body became stiff, rigid. My arms stretched above my head, my head arched backwards as far as it could go. Every inch of my body was in a state of tension. Straining. Reaching for something without knowing what I was reaching for. The tension grew more and more intense every second. I couldn't take it. It felt as if the top of my head was about to explode.

Straining. Stretching. Crying. Gasping for life, for death. Then a sudden shiver. A climax, an orgasm. And utter relaxation.

Tears rolled down my face. The bliss was God. No mind, no tension. Utter peace. Eternal.

Then a moment later the straining and stretching began again. It was like an intense labour pain, like something was trying to force its way out of me. The tension in every fibre of my body was incredible, the strain incredible. I was sweating profusely. It was an agony, a torture. Tension. More tension.

Then suddenly the gasp of release, the climax.

And the beautiful let-go, the absolute serenity that followed.

The straining again, the stretching again. The orgasm, the relief. The bliss.

The cycle repeated itself over and over again. Each time the tension was greater than the time before, each time the bliss, the reward, that much greater. Waves of bliss washed over me, cleansing me. Wave after wave, an extraordinary rush of pulsating, throbbing ecstasy.

Yet despite the bliss that followed each time, as soon as the straining and stretching would begin again, I would think, 'No, I can't take it any more. Stop! I've had enough!' Whatever was happening, or trying to happen, I was trying to force down. I was frightened. Both of the physical pain and of the happening itself. What was it? What was going on? Were these death pains, birth pains? The intensity kept building up. Surely my body wouldn't be able to survive it much longer; it would kill me!

It went on and on. Then suddenly, in the middle of it — incongruously, ludicrously — one of the hotel servants walked into the room with a pot of afternoon tea. He was terrified. Should he call a doctor? Another sannyasin? I couldn't speak, I couldn't reassure him that I was all right, but somehow his presence, and my concern over his concern, was enough to break the chain of what was happening. I rolled over on the bed, pressed my head into a pillow and began sobbing. The servant left the room finally. The crying continued.

Whatever had been happening was over. I didn't know whether I was glad or disappointed. It felt as though I hadn't allowed something to happen. I might have been destroyed, annihilated. I might have disappeared; I might have been no more. I still was.

But the bliss remained behind, the waves. A few days later I realized why the phrase 'waves of bliss' existed. They *were* waves, there was no question about it. Every time I closed my eyes the waves were there. They became my reality. They flooded me; they brought me immediately to my centre. To a place where there were no thoughts, no mind. Only an absolute calmness and serenity.

I spent the rest of the meditation camp in quiet bliss that nothing on the outside could disturb. All need for catharsis left me totally. It seemed as though I would never cry again, that nothing would ever bother me again.

But of course, as time went on, tensions began to accumulate again in my psyche, in my body. Anger was still there, sadness was still there, all the old things were still there. Yet the waves of bliss remained, they're still with me. I can't call them into being; they just come when they come. Whenever I'm centred they're there. They seem not so much to bring the bliss as to be an accompaniment to it.

The period of euphoria that followed this 'thing' that happened to me at Mt Abu — I still don't know what to call it — lasted for several months. Then I came down, I stopped soaring. It was probably inevitable. I began saying *no* again when there's only *yes*, I began fighting again when there's only acceptance, only surrender.

'*No* is the ego's assertion,' Bhagwan says. '*Yes* is the ego's death. With *yes*, there is nothing left for the ego to do. You just accept, you just surrender, you just flow.'

I try to swim upstream, I cry *no*. But the current is too strong. Sooner or later I'm forced to relax, to let go, to float effortlessly downstream, murmuring to myself, laughing to myself, 'Yes, yes, a thousand times yes!'

There's light, and laughter, and silence, and waves of bliss. The legacies of the past. Unearned, undeserved. Gifts. . . .

It's happening again

It's happening to me again. Laughter. Hours and hours of it. Non-stop laughter: uncontrollable, uncaused. Different from before, the same as before. Worse. Better. Incomparable to anything that ever happened in the past. Uniquely itself.

It's been three years since I experienced anything like this. Three years of nothing much happening, of just waiting, not even knowing what I was waiting for. Wondering whether satoris, dramatic explosions of energy, would ever happen to me again. Not knowing how meaningful they were, but missing them anyway. Attached to 'experiences', to experiencing.

Now suddenly, out of nowhere, here it is again. Something — I don't know what. A perpetual tickle in my heart that keeps threatening (promising?) to reduce me (raise me?) to unending, hour-after-hour laughter. Even now, while I'm writing this, I can feel it. In my heart, in my throat. At any moment I may throw down my pencil, run for the bed and—

Rolling back and forth on my back, from side to side. Holding my chest, which is where the laughter seems to be coming from this time. In the past, when laughter like this happened, it has always come from my belly. The first time was when I took sannyas. Then later, at various meditation camps, after periods of intense catharsis — suddenly realizing the absurdity of suffering, the absurdity of life, the absurdity of everything that happens around Bhagwan. A fly resting on my nose and I would laugh uproariously. Listening to the sounds of other people in catharsis, remembering my own long history of accumulated traumas, and the laughter would start, and continue, for ten minutes, fifteen minutes, an hour. Freshening the world, clearing my vision and giving me the most extraordinary stomach-muscle aches. My belly would be sore, the muscles in my face sore. But this time it's a chest phenomenon. I clutch at my chest and howl with laughter. For no reason. Not because the world is absurd, not because life is absurd, not because *I'm*

absurd. Just because it's happening. A lifetime of stored up laughter thrown out into the universe. The trees laugh back at me. And the birds . . . we hold regular conversations between us. The crows' cackles and mine answer each other back and forth in cacophonous rhythm. Glorious. Transforming.

It all started with my sinuses acting up again. I was feeling terrible. I had a persistent headache that was making me irritable all the time. Bhagwan suggested that hypnotherapy might be helpful, so I arranged to get together with Santosh, the ashram hypnotherapist.

I had assumed that Santosh would come to my room, put me in a state of deep relaxation and tell me that my headaches were going away, that every day they would get less and less severe, that within ten days they would be completely gone, etc. Or at the very least, he would help me to be detached from the pain, so I could be a witness to it. There was no reason for me to feel lousy just because my body did.

Instead, Santosh started doing gestalt work with me. He told me to close my eyes, lie back on my bed and talk to my headache. It sounded insane, but what the hell? I started talking. Suddenly it was my mother I was talking to. I began fighting, kicking. 'Get away from me, get away!' I yelled. Writhing, struggling, crying. 'Get away! Don't touch me! Don't touch me there!'

I'm struggling to get away from someone. It's not my mother; I don't know who it is. I'm being held down. I'm scared. I don't want him, them (who?) to hold me down, to touch me, to hurt me.

I'm five years old, I'm in the hospital, I'm about to be operated on. I'm frightened. The experience is nothing like my parents told me it would be, it's nothing like what I expected. They're holding me down, they're placing a gas mask over my face; I can't breathe. They're trying to kill me, I'm suffocating. Please, oh please. No, please. Help! Hellp!

They start working on me. The operation is happening; I can see the whole thing. My body is lying on the table, but I'm not in it. I'm floating somewhere above it, watching what they're doing to me. Terrified.

Nowadays people talk about their out-of-body experiences, but thirty years ago to say, 'I saw the whole thing, Mommy. I *wasn't* asleep,' was to be laughed at, to be told that I was imagining what couldn't possibly have happened. If it *couldn't* have happened, if it was impossible, how can one go on insisting that it did? The child begins to deny his own reality, to cut himself off from his own

experiences. I'll only feel and experience what the adults in my life say it's possible to feel and experience; I refuse to feel the rest. I'll keep it hidden even from myself, I'll ignore it until it disappears. I'll only accept as truth what everyone else around me accepts as truth. I'll become false. There's security in it. A half-person: safe, enclosed. Limited by the limitations of those around me.

According to Bhagwan, each person has seven bodies: the physical body, the etheric body, the astral body, the mental, the spiritual, the cosmic and the nirvanic.* Most of us are only aware of our physical body, but the other bodies are not less real just because we're not normally conscious of them. One can become conscious of the etheric body (the energy body) during a dream, during an operation, on the battlefield, in an accident. The body lies on the ground badly hurt. The etheric body, unharmed, hovers above, a detached witness.

But, of course, no one told me that when I was a child. Everyone was so insistent that my reality was a lie that after a while I thought that maybe I was just making up what I remembered; maybe I *was* lying. Yet somehow, a stubborn, faint whisper seemed to remain inside me, refusing to give up: I know what I know. The whisper grew more and more faint until I couldn't hear it any more. It lay buried, ignored, but waiting to be uncovered some day. A whisper, perhaps, that took me finally to Bhagwan, and that took me back again into those experiences — phenomenological, irrational — that I had spent so many years trying to deny.

I lay on the bed now, Santosh sitting beside me, and a multitude of feelings and experiences from the past, superimposed upon one another, come back to me. There's an overlapping, one memory merging into another.

Suddenly I'm down south; it's during the war, I'm two years old. I'm in the bedroom, supposedly taking a nap. My body is lying on the bed and I'm flying around the room, free from the confines and gravitational restrictions of the body. The room is dazzlingly bright; I'm bathed in light. I'm flying, I'm flying. It's so beautiful. God. Ecstasy.

My mistake was in trying to talk about it. Everyone laughed when I told them I could fly, they made fun of me. Finally I stopped believing in my own experiences. The period of grace came to an end. The flying stopped, the dazzling Godlight disappeared from my life, until that day up at Samarpan when it came back again in a sudden,

*See *The Psychology of the Esoteric* by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Harper & Row, New York, 1977) for a detailed description of the seven bodies.

intense explosion. A remembrance of things past, a glimpse of what had been and of what might be.

At my second session with Santosh, the day after the first, he forced me to confront some of the things that had been brought up the day before. 'You didn't just say you don't want to be touched,' he said. 'You said you don't want to be touched *there*. Where is "there"? Who's touching you?'

I look inside. I see, and don't see.

I see myself lying down, my legs spread apart. I see his penis, I feel my panic. 'No, no. Please don't.' I'm crying, frantic. He (Who is it? My father, my grandfather? I know it's someone I love, someone I trust) — he says, 'Don't worry, it will feel good. I won't hurt you, you know I wouldn't hurt you. You'll see, it'll feel good.' But please, no, please. I don't want him to do it.

I scream, I fight. Through my terror I hear Santosh: 'Who is it? Tell me who it is.'

Suddenly I see. It's a young soldier from the air-force base my father is stationed at. I'm two and a half years old. My parents and sister have gone out and he is babysitting for me. I can see his face as clearly as if he is standing in front of me right now, as if it's happening right now.

I'm playing with him, kissing him, I feel very loving towards him. Then suddenly I'm on the table, my legs spread — terrified, helpless. 'Don't touch me, don't touch me there,' I yell, the screams at the time, for all I know, remaining inside my head, internalized. I struggle. He lets me up. He's angry at me. I don't understand it, a minute before we were friends. Then, 'Promise me you won't tell anyone or I'll never come and visit you any more,' he says. 'Promise.'

So I never tell. I promise. I don't want him to be mad at me; I want us to be friends again. I keep it all inside me, so deeply submerged, the promise and the need to keep it so great, that even in all the uncovering of the unconscious I've done before this — through meditation, through psychotherapy, through my writing — it remains hidden. Creating infinite distortions that flash across my consciousness now, things that I had previously remembered as the cause of later confusions and pain, but now are seen to be caused, themselves, by the trauma just uncovered. Where does it stop? An infinite regress. The traumatic impact of this incident too, no doubt preceded by its own long, complicated history.

To be living in the now means to be living without any fixed patterns

of behaviour. To respond to each situation as if it were totally new. But our minds go on making connections. A button is pressed, however subtle, however obscure, and the three-year-old you, or the seven-month-old you, or the ten-year-old you, reacts; the you who existed at the time that your attitude towards the present situation first developed, many years in the past, beyond conscious memory. Everything that happens becomes a reflection, a variation of some past happening. You act as you acted then, or as you didn't act then, but always related in some way with what went before.

A Buddha has dropped the past. He is discontinuous with it, he is no longer influenced by it. He has transcended his own conditioning, his own history. But it didn't happen overnight. He worked in many ways, with many techniques. He delved into them deeply, he practised them with the totality of his being. Finally he saw the futility of techniques, of effort. They dropped spontaneously, he surrendered. And in that surrender was the transcendence. The past no longer existed. Only the now. Unencumbered, fresh.

Techniques are useful only until one can see the futility of techniques, the futility of all efforts. But when one is stuck somewhere, a technique can be helpful. Perhaps the headaches I had been having were my body's way of telling me that there was something to look into, something that needed to be seen. Bhagwan seems to encourage us to *use* our problems, whether they're physical or emotional, practical or spiritual. Our pains can lead to bliss; our suffering, used properly, can lead us to ecstasy. Our problems seem to be keys into the unconscious. Keys that open up the door to greater and greater awareness.

During the lecture the next morning, sitting and listening to Bhagwan talk, suddenly I was crying like I hadn't cried in years. At first it was just a tremendous outpouring, a flood, not related to anything, my mind completely blank, but after a few minutes it turned into a minutely detailed memory of the incident with the soldier. It was all there, right in front of me; everything that had been said, done, felt, feared, repressed. A scene that began in innocence and ended up with me being frightened, confused, told I was a bad girl, that it was all my fault. 'You made me do it,' he yelled at me afterwards when he was sitting in the chair, his head in his lap, sobbing. 'It's all your fault. Didn't anyone ever tell you that you should never touch a man's penis? You're a bad girl. Bad!' What did I do wrong? I don't understand. I feel terrible. Tears come to my eyes, I want to cry. 'But it's okay,' he says finally,

comforting me; we're friends again. 'I won't tell anyone you were a bad girl, I promise. So don't tell anybody what happened, okay? Promise me you'll never, ever tell.'

Sitting in the lecture, remembering the experience, was like watching a movie and reliving it at the same time. Total subjectivity and total objectivity at once. Both the insect trapped under the microscope and the scientist peering down at it in its death-throes.

All day long, one memory after another came up. I remembered the time, before the incident with the soldier, when I had my own private world of safety, a world where I was bathed in light, where God talked to me, where I could fly. A world where I remembered another mother and father, a progression of other me's, of other families that were mine, of other environments, other circumstances. A world where a man in a long white robe talked to me, comforted me, told me I wasn't bad when my mother said I was. My private world was my sanctuary; he was my God, my father, my mother, my everything.

But I promised I wouldn't tell anyone what happened. Not even my private-world father who always comforted me, not even he could know. My mother was right: I was bad. I made someone I loved cry, I really did. And if she was right, I was wrong; my private world was wrong, a lie.

So I destroyed it. Purposely, deliberately, wilfully. I never flew again, I never lived in light again. I stopped consciously remembering my dreams, my past realities. I never saw my father/friend/confidant/confessor again. It was only after I had been with Bhagwan for several years that I remembered knowing him before, that I remembered remembering him.

Lying on my bed, re-experiencing my deliberate destruction of my private world, the pain in my head was excruciating. It was as if I was killing myself. But a part of me stood outside the experience and watched it from a distance. A detached witness. Wise, aloof, amused. Telling me afterwards — the child 'me' who had destroyed my private world — that it had its own reality, its own truth. That the things I remembered as a child, which no one ever believed, the voices that I heard, were all aspects of myself, they were all parts of me that had a right to live; it was all right to accept my own knowings.

I cried and cried. I lay back on the bed afterwards exhausted, I allowed my private world back in.

And then, eureka! I was flying!

Santosh had suggested that I give myself an hour a day, twice a day, to cry. Crying, he said, would relieve my headaches; it would release whatever it was on a psychological level that was causing them. It seemed to work. The more I cried, the clearer my head felt.

Two days after the day the scene with the soldier came back to me, I was in my room; it was my 'time to cry'. I closed my eyes. I started thinking about something that had annoyed me earlier in the day, trying to use the incident as a catalyst to bring up my tears. I felt angry; I began to cry. Then suddenly the crying turned into laughter and I was laughing and laughing, carried away by the cascading force of it. There were no thoughts, no memories, just laughter. A half hour, non-stop.

When it was over, I didn't think anything about it any more. I had laughed like that before. It was no different from crying. A catharsis. A release of blocked, excess energy.

When the laughing started again at 5.30 (my second 'crying time' of the day) it took me more by surprise. One minute I was sitting and talking to a friend who had come into the room, and the next minute — having told him that he would have to leave now, it was my time to cry — I was rolling on the bed, consumed with laughter. The door had scarcely closed behind Rama Prem when I was at it again. Trying to cry, my face posed in anticipation of pain, looking for something to cry about, something to work out, something to free me through the revelation of it, but laughter came instead. There was nothing I could do about it; I *couldn't* cry. Laughter had taken its place, what to do? Only laughter and laughter, more and more of it, a wellspring of well-being.

Whenever a thought would cross my mind, whenever a memory would come into focus, no matter how painful on one level the thought or the memory might be, on another level it was uproariously funny. Everything that had ever happened to me was seen in a new light. A gift from the gods, a blessing. All the pain and suffering, all the affronts to the ego, all the shocks that brought a momentary awareness before the mind closed in on them and interpreted, and found reason for dismay. Everything was all right as it was; it always had been. I had been blessed by my misfortunes, awakened by my pains. My first trauma, a day or two after my birth, brought my first moment of consciousness. What I had thought of as incidents that had harmed me, that had restricted my possibilities, were in fact opportunities through which, had I only had the eyes to see it at the time, I might have grown to

a new awareness, a new expansion of consciousness.

The laughter went on. Loud, uncontrollable. I knew that all my life I had known this laughter, that it had always been there, it had always wanted to come out, but I had suppressed it, hidden it. I had laughed within and presented another face outside. The moment of first trauma, the moment of first awakening — the laughter was there, my infant body shaking with a delight that must have been interpreted as crying by those who saw it.

I laughed all the time when I was young. But people are frightened by laughter, they feel threatened by it. I was scolded for it, punished. I learnt to keep it inside me. To suffer when things weren't going the way I had anticipated, rather than delighting at the unexpectedness of something unforeseen. I learnt to cry because life was cruel, rather than to laugh because it was capricious. I learnt to interpret through the eyes of sadness, of fear. I forgot the playfulness of existence, I became blind to it. Nothing of significance, really. The usual. The destruction of the innocents. The destruction of innocence.

But now, the laughter, having once started, was impossible to stop. They could hear me in the meditation hall. I was disturbing the meditation. Chaitanya came upstairs to try to quiet me down. I put a pillow over my head and continued laughing, suffocating and laughing.

It went on for an hour, an hour and a half. Knowing that I would miss dinner if I didn't go to the canteen soon, I got up finally and took a cold shower. The water, rather than sobering me as I had thought it would, sent me into new paroxysms of laughter. No, it was impossible. I couldn't make it over to the canteen; I would have to do without dinner.

But Chaitanya seemed confident. 'Once you get out of the room you'll be okay,' he assured me. So I suppressed my laughter as much as I could, I strained to keep a straight face — looking neither to the left nor to the right, knowing that anything could set me off again — and went downstairs. It was hopeless; I couldn't do it. The laughter burst out of me. I walked, ran, skipped, twirled — laughing and laughing. There were a hundred or more people around. I knew I should be self-conscious — it was the kind of laughter one did, if at all, in the privacy of one's room, hidden from view; a private joke — but it was gloriously liberating that I wasn't. Laughing in public, hearing other people laughing at me, with me, and not caring, was more liberating than the laughter itself. It was okay to be happy, okay to feel good, okay to laugh, okay to let other people laugh at me.

Chaitanya led me along as if he was a circus trainer and I was the prize exhibit. He tried not to be embarrassed by me, or angry at me, but of course he was both. What to do? I was insane. The Zen master's insanity that is health.

'Laughter is the very essence of religion,' Bhagwan says. 'Laughter is egoless. The whole play of existence is so beautiful that laughter can be the only response to it, the only real prayer. If laughter is lost, everything is lost. You lose the festivity of your being. You become colourless, monotonous, dead. Your energy is no longer streaming. Laughter is a flowering. Only a person who laughs well can weep well; and only if you can weep well, and laugh well, are you alive. Laughter is one of the most beautiful doors to the divine.'

Madness or meditation, there's a fine line between them sometimes. You touch one while moving towards the other. But which one this laughter belonged to was irrelevant. How to judge it? It was just happening.

When we got to the canteen I tried to eat, but every two minutes I had to get up and run into the storage room, too overcome with laughter to sit still. Everyone was laughing with me, but not quite in the same way. They could stop. I couldn't.

I would laugh for ten minutes in the storage room, then come back into the dining hall again to try to eat. It was impossible. The energy was going up and out; to try to force food down and in was against the whole nature of the phenomenon. A bite of food here, three minutes of laughter there. It was hardly worth the effort. I gave up finally and ran back to my room, hysterical with laughter.

On and on the laughter went. Another hour. I began to wonder whether it would ever stop. Chaitanya said I was bothering the music group which was meeting in the meditation hall directly below our room. I stuffed a pillow over my head. Another hour. Chaitanya said I was bothering the chanting group which had begun after the music group ended. I tried to stop, I kept telling myself, 'This isn't funny. I can't keep on laughing forever,' but the effort to stop was too funny, too absurd — self-defeating. Chaitanya told me to jump up and down shouting 'Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!' in order to change the direction of the energy, and channel it inwards. I tried it for two minutes, then collapsed on the bed, howling with laughter again. Clearly I was pissing everyone off, and I didn't blame them. Was it going to go on all night? Would anyone get any sleep?

I tried to force the energy inside me; I let my body vibrate with it.

It worked at last; I quieted down, meditation happened. I slept. Hours of sleep that wasn't sleep and dreams that weren't dreams. I woke up during the night. Something had been revealed to me. I fell back to sleep. By the morning I forgot what I had dreamt, or remembered; only recalling that it had been significant, that I had woken up feeling, 'Aha. Yes. Of course.' But now it was gone again. I laughed. I was off and running.

Miraculously, I sat through Bhagwan's morning discourse without making a sound. But the moment Bhagwan left the auditorium, the laughter erupted out of me again. Was this going to go on for ever?

When I was busy doing something during the day, I was fine; but the minute I relaxed, the tickle would be there in my heart and I would start laughing again. A half hour here, a half hour there. What in heaven's name was going *on*?

The Indian swamis decided it was a satori. They came over and congratulated me. Had I become enlightened? I laughed and laughed. Yatri, whose room is right next to Chaitanya's and mine and who, consequently, had been forced to hear the hour-after-hour laughter of the night before whether he liked it or not, told me that he had sat in his room all night listening to me laughing till he had started laughing himself. He had been depressed for days; it had changed his energy completely. He thanked me. We started laughing together in the office, the entire office staff laughing along with us.

Every time Chaitanya walked into our room I seemed to be lying on the bed cackling. He would walk in, take one look at me, say, 'Oh, Jesus!' and walk out again. Enough was enough after a while; I wasn't enjoying it any more; even though my not-enjoying-it was so funny it was making me laugh. I asked Laxmi if I could go to darshan to see Bhagwan. 'What's wrong with laughing?' she asked. 'It's beautiful. Enjoy it. You're having a satori; it's not a problem,' and we laughed together in her office. But she gave me a darshan appointment anyway. Maybe for the sake of the rest of the ashram. I was driving everyone crazy!

There were about forty of us at darshan that night. We sat on the floor in silence, waiting for Bhagwan. I wasn't laughing. Bhagwan came in, sat down; the darshan started.

First the people taking sannyas came up one by one. Those whom Bhagwan had called from all over the world. Those who had finally heard his call, and finally come. He spoke to each of them at length.

Long, compelling gazes into each new sannyasin's eyes. The classic seduction. Something very special, very private, was communicated to each one. Something that went beyond words. A touch, a look, a smile. Then he spoke briefly to each sannyasin who was leaving and to each who had just arrived.

Just when I was about to give up, convinced that there wouldn't be time for me to speak to Bhagwan — two hours had passed; God knew how many more people were still waiting — my name was called.

'Mmmmm, Satya,' Bhagwan said.

I sat down in front of him. He was laughing. 'So Satya, you have been laughing, hmmm?' I giggled, nodding, relieved that Laxmi had apparently told Bhagwan about it so I wouldn't have to. 'For many hours, hmmm?' I nodded again. He laughed again. 'Good. Very good.'

He told me to raise my arms out to the side and to show him how I laughed. I raised my arms. Could I laugh like this? Not clutching at my body, not curled in upon myself? But suddenly, open, exposed, vulnerable — a whole different story — I was doing it. The laughter sounded forced, strained. A shallow laugh, very different from the kind of laughter that had been happening for the last few days. But whatever it was, it was. It took over and did its own thing until, after a few minutes, it stopped by itself.

'Good,' Bhagwan said, 'good.' He was laughing. So was everyone else at darshan. I seemed to be the night's comedy routine, the evening's diversion. 'The laughing is good,' he said. 'Don't try to stop it. It will go away by itself. Your whole energy has changed; it's very good. You're getting ready now for a big satori, hmmm?' He laughed, I laughed. 'There is any problem with the laughing?'

I rattled on: disturbing others, etc. 'And Chaitanya?' he asked. 'He can't be liking it very much. It will be a good trick,' he said. 'Whenever you want to take revenge on Chaitanya, you just laugh.' Everyone laughed.

We talked. Chit-chat. I couldn't believe myself. Usually I couldn't even speak in front of Bhagwan, I was too awed by him to be able to remember how to use my vocal chords, and suddenly here I was, jabbering away, laughing, interrupting Bhagwan, carrying on like we were two life-long pals having a jolly old time together. Amazing!

Then, 'Good, good' — the signal for dismissal. I bowed my head to his feet. He put his hand on my head.

The moment he touched me, my body started vibrating. Like a cat's purring, but more intense. I kept expecting him to take his hand off

my head. He didn't. The vibrating grew more and more forceful; any minute I would explode. I could feel the energy rushing up to my head. Something had to give, *something*. It was too powerful; it couldn't go on like this. A momentary touch from Bhagwan, if you're lucky enough to get one, can energize you for months on end, it can transform you totally. His hand was on my head now for one minute, two, for longer. What was he trying to do? The satori he had mentioned. . . . If I could surrender to what was happening now, if I could just let go, if I could allow it to happen, was it to happen now?

Another minute, his hand still on my head. Suddenly I thought to myself; I shouldn't be taking up so much of Bhagwan's time. I forced myself to calm down, forced the energy to leave me, not realizing until later how stupid I had been. If Bhagwan had wanted to take his hand off my head, he could have done it at any time. It was fear that created my concern: fear of allowing the energy to explode; the ego's fear of the unknown, the ego's cautious self-preservation. I shut myself off, I closed up. The energy subsided.

Bhagwan took his hand off my head. 'Good, Satya. Very good,' he said.

I stood up and started to go back to my place with the others. Suddenly the laughter welled up in me. There was no way in the world I could sit down on the floor quietly for the rest of the darshan. The laughter inside me was too much, it was threatening to burst out of me at any moment.

Then it burst. The dam broke. Laughing, I ran out, I escaped. Ran past Bhagwan, ran past everyone, ran out of the auditorium, ran down the path — jet-propelled, forced by an energy that didn't seem to be me, laughing and laughing. Behind me, the sound of Bhagwan laughing, of everyone at darshan laughing. I ran and ran, the laughter running with me like an accompaniment. Me, but not me. Coming from inside me, but in an odd way external to me. The people I ran past laughed with me. I ran into my room and collapsed on the bed. The laughter continued. Would it ever end?

But of course it did, finally. Later that same night, for the first time in days, I was crying again. Stupidly, deliberately. *Choosing* to cry rather than to laugh, because it seemed safer.

Chaitanya pressed one of my buttons. I started to laugh instead of getting angry. Then suddenly I remembered Bhagwan's words: 'Whenever you want to take revenge on Chaitanya, just laugh' — and I was

sure Chaitanya would *see* my laughter as revenge, he would be sure I was doing it on purpose just to infuriate him; he would get angry at me. So I chose, instead, to cry. It was safer: Chaitanya would blame himself instead of blaming me. Laughing was a good trick. Crying was a better one.

I watched myself choosing to cry; crying. I could hardly believe I was actually *choosing* to be miserable. It was so absurd that I started laughing. Then a minute later I was crying again, feeling the safety of tears, of misery, feeling protected by them. Pain shrouds us, misery protects us. Anguish allows us to be closed, to hide ourselves from existence. It gives us the excuse, the justification to hide. Our pains are a sham. We clothe ourselves in them deliberately. They're our disguise. So we can hide from others, hide from ourselves, hide from life.

I couldn't sleep at all that night; I had too much energy. I went into the garden and sat under a tree. I wanted to laugh, I wanted to dance, I wanted to sing, but I just sat there, bottling my energy down, forcing it not to erupt, so that it wouldn't create any problems with the ashram guard who was sitting nearby. It was bad enough that I had run out of darshan. I didn't want to wake up the whole ashram now.

I sat still. I behaved myself. I was a good girl. I missed.

I missed. What might have happened didn't. It feels as if there's something still unfinished, something still to happen. I wait, in fear and anticipation. I can feel something just around the corner. But while I go on waiting for it, looking for it, watching for it, nothing happens, of course. Expectation leads to disappointment: I've always known it.

I'm living in a state of emergency, a state of crisis, alleviated from time to time by outbursts of laughter or brief periods of crying. I feel as if I'm waiting for the summer school-vacation to begin, when for all I know they may have decided to cancel summer this year.

My mind goes on trying to figure things out. To decide what's happening, what's going to happen, what *may* happen. As if the mind is bigger than existence itself. As if the mind can out-guess the unknown. Life is not a problem to be solved, Bhagwan says, it's a mystery to be lived; but I try to solve it, to figure out the whys and wherefores and hows, knowing all along how absurd my effort is. Life is just to be lived, to be celebrated, but I continue to set up hypothesis after hypothesis, and to try to demystify the miraculous.

'God must be dying of laughing,' Bhagwan says, 'seeing the ridiculousness of the world and the ridiculousness of the people He has

created. It's a comedy. If you become silent, you'll hear God laughing. You'll hear the whole of existence laughing with you: the trees, the stars, the stones.' All I know is that when I make a mistake now I laugh about it instead of feeling badly. When I find that my ego is hurt about something, I laugh instead of getting angry or sad. Perhaps that's the miracle? Perhaps what I'm waiting for has already happened?

Or perhaps this is just a getting-ready period; perhaps my whole life has been. But a getting ready for what? I don't know. Maybe the headaches that triggered off this whole thing, and the days of crying and laughing and reliving past traumas, were just to prepare the body, prepare the psyche. Illness is a purification, a catharsis, a cleansing. Hepatitis can be a powerful meditation, TB can be the best thing that ever happened to you: a forced slowing down, an opportunity to look within, a situation that makes escape impossible. People come back to the ashram after two months of hepatitis, two months of enforced non-doing. They're radiant.

The experience, when it happens (whether it's a minor satori, I suppose, or enlightenment itself) is so powerful that unless the body and the mind are prepared for it, unless they're strong enough to hold the tremendous influx of energy, one won't survive. Death is possible. Instead of losing the ego, one will lose one's mind, or one's body. A master has to do two things: he has to push you towards enlightenment, and he has to hold you back until you're ready for it, until you're capable of containing it.

'God is very destructive,' Bhagwan said recently. 'Your old world will be shattered absolutely. That's why you need to find a master. Moving into the unknown is a tremendous risk. One should move with somebody who knows the territory, otherwise the happening can be so shattering that you'll be lost. Somebody is needed like a midwife. You'll be reborn, but somebody is needed to watch over you. His very presence will help you to relax.'

Bhagwan is there. If I can only allow what is happening to happen. If I can only let go, surrender. If I can only accept.

Life is insecurity, life is problems, life is pain. Life is unending bliss.

A taste of Buddhahood

Energy goes on increasing. I laugh, talk, dance, play. I spend all night up on the roof singing and dancing, a vaudevillian. Shuffling off to Buffalo, or in this case, maybe, Benares. Tap-dancing. A wing-and-buck routine. I sing to the moon.

When the monsoon rains are too heavy I try to stay inside, but my room is too small to contain the energy. My legs start singing, 'I wanna dance, I wanna dance,' to a tune straight out of a 1950s' musical. Some nights, despite the rain, I listen to my legs and escape to the roof; I let my energy explode. Other nights I lay awake on the bed staring at the ceiling above my head, the energy playing around in my body, moving into feelings, thoughts. I converse with Bhagwan. I get up beside the bed and dance for him.

Vivek tells me I'm going to be enlightened soon. I laugh, feeling grateful for her words. It's as if, through Vivek, Bhagwan is giving me the freedom to allow what's happening to happen, without judging or trying to stop it, giving me the freedom to enjoy this beautiful madness that's upon me, the permission to be crazy with laughter, crazy with joy, crazy with delight.

In the West, Bhagwan says, mystics end up in mental institutions because their experiences are totally misunderstood. In the East, madmen become *mahatmas*; they're worshipped for their eccentricities, their bizarre behaviour. It's not always easy to tell what's spiritual and what's pathological. What's a satori and what's the liver medicine I'm taking now? And does it matter? What's my body, what's my mind, what's my energy, what's my being?

Vandana asked a question for the morning discourse recently, in which she spoke about my laughter. Bhagwan answered: 'This is something very important that has to be understood. Satya is in a laughing space; something is stirring in her. She is not the laughing type; she is the crying type. When she first came here, whenever she would come to see me she would start crying. Tears were easier for her. Now suddenly

tears have disappeared and laughter has arisen. And such mad laughter that she goes on laughing for hours. It has become almost painful to her. The whole night she goes on laughing. For no reason at all.

'Naturally, one becomes afraid. What is happening? Her whole life she repressed her laughter unknowingly. Now the repression has disappeared; the lid has been taken off. Now she cannot cry. Tears are no longer there. The whole life's laughter is coming up with a vengeance; it is almost hysterical. But a beautiful space, because it is an indication of a great transformation, an alchemical change. Tears are becoming laughter. She has moved from the negative to the positive.

'Soon laughter will also disappear. Just as tears have disappeared, laughter will disappear. Then she will come to the exact middle. Then there will be great balance, an equilibrium. That equilibrium, that tranquillity, is the goal. If there is only one choice, tears or laughter, then laugh. But if there is a choice of being silent, then tears and laughter both have to be dropped. One becomes silent.

'Soon Satya will come to that silence. After the storm of laughter there will be a great silence, as there always is after the storm. This is a release, a release of repressed laughter. It has to be removed from her consciousness. It is being removed.

'And she is pouring like anything.'

It was the first time Bhagwan ever spoke about me in the lecture, or mentioned my name. I had a whole theory about it; I was sure he would *never* mention me. So much for theories. When Bhagwan spoke about me being the crying type, I wanted to cry in sorrow for the past; when he spoke about me moving from negativity to positivity, I wanted to weep for joy. But he was right: tears didn't seem to be there any more. I sat quietly, listening to him talk about me as though he was talking about someone else. While, inside me, a beautiful laughter bubbled up, enjoying itself.

I stayed in the lecture hall for a while after the discourse, my body shaking with silent laughter; then went to Vandana's room and thanked her for the gift her question had given me. I touched her feet. She touched mine. We both laughed.

Sadness has been a habit with me for so long. It has been a substitute for anger, a substitute for disappointment, a reaction to frustration. Whenever the world hasn't conformed to my dictates, whenever it has gone ahead, totally unconcerned about my wishes, my desires, my longings, and done its own thing, I've reacted by feeling sad, unworthy, rejected, unloved. Suffering. A tragedian. It's been my way of

holding my own, of saying, 'me, me, me,' of maintaining my illusion of separation from the rest of existence. It has been my way of proving I exist.

Satya the sufferer. Now suddenly I'm Satya the laughter. Switching one identity for another, even if it's a more positive one. Getting identified, now, with my laughter. The ego up to its same old tricks.

During a Hindi lecture a few days ago, Bhagwan again spoke about my laughing. I don't know how I knew he was talking about me — the word *satya* (truth) comes up often in Hindi lectures; I rarely pay attention to it — but I knew this time that he was talking about me, without knowing what he was saying. He had started out, apparently, by describing me as one of his closest disciples. Whatever he said after that was irrelevant as far as I was concerned. My laughing — ho hum, it was an old story. But to be called one of his closest disciples! How my ego loved it! How I preened before my own judgments! Laughing, all the while, at my reaction.

My role in the mythology Bhagwan is creating around him is becoming more and more clear. My name is Satya: I laugh. Oh well, it could be worse. It could be — not so long ago it would have been — that 'a Satya' might someday come to mean one who suffers needlessly, endlessly; one who chooses suffering over enlightenment; one who would rather be in anguish than not-be at all. Thank goodness I've dropped that one finally. And about time, too.

I have a tickle in my heart. Other people around the ashram are having something or other happen to their heart these days. Arup has a burning in her heart; Vandana has a strong, sharp pain in her heart; Big Prem woke up in the middle of the night with a pain in her heart that was so intense she was sure she was having a heart attack; Asheesh has to stop working, he grows breathless, his heart feels faint. It's happening to dozens of people. Each experiences it in their own way, the phenomenon manifests itself uniquely in each of us — for some a pain, for some a throbbing, for me a tickle — but it's all the same thing. It's as if our hearts are bursting open. We're filled with too much love to contain it. When we can let it out, when we surrender to it, the pain or the tickle (the discomfort) vanishes, and there's just love, an abundance of it. Undirected, unfocused, unmotivated. Not love towards anything or anyone; just pure love.

People at the ashram continually seem to go through the same things at the same time. We all get sick at the same time, we all get

depressed, or sad, or happy at the same time. Once, a few years ago, dozens of people even broke their big toe at the same time. It feels as if it has to be more than just a coincidence, that Bhagwan must be doing something. Big Prem asked him once, only half facetiously, if he sits in his room all day with some kind of contraption that controls our moods, putting everyone in the same mood at the same time.

'You are all here because of me,' he answered. 'I'm your centre. Each of you is deeply involved with me so naturally you become involved with each other. I'm the bridge from where you move into the other. If you really love me, this is going to happen more and more. The whole community will pass through a phase, a cycle, simultaneously.'

'You are disappearing as separate entities and becoming part of the community, the commune. Alone you have all kinds of limitations, but when you're one of many, infinite energy is available. Many things will start happening which cannot happen when you are alone. A commune is like an orchestra. You're pooling your energies with me. Naturally, you'll start feeling the same kind of rhythm, the same harmony.'

'This commune is not an ordinary commune. It is an experiment to provoke God, to bring a kind of Buddhahood into the world. Right now there is no bridge between man and God. This commune is an experiment to create the bridge. I'm trying to create a space where God can descend. You may not be aware of what is going to happen, you may have come here only to solve your problems, but I am cooking something else.'

'Slowly, one by one, I'm adding more people to the commune. Soon there will be thousands here. The more people there are, the more possibility there will be for miracles to happen, because the more God will be available. I want to create a small city where people will be living totally egolessly. A small stream cannot reach the ocean; it will be lost somewhere. But if many streams pool into one, it becomes a Ganges. This commune is an effort to create a Ganges of consciousness.'

Another time he went even further: 'My sannyasins are the beginning of a totally new man,' he said. 'Yes, once in a while a man like Buddha, Kabir, Krishna, Christ, Zarathustra has happened in the past, but only individuals. Now, only individuals won't do; only a Buddha here and there won't be of much help. The world is in such a state of crisis that a single Buddha won't be enough. We need thousands of Buddhas.'

'Hence I am not interested in Christians, I am interested in Christs; I am not interested in Jainas, I am interested in Mahaviras; I am not

interested in Buddhists, I am interested in Buddhas. My effort is not to create followers, believers, but to create individuals, lovers, meditators who can stand on their own and become a light. The night is going to become darker and darker. We need millions of lights around the world, millions of people who are so loving, so silent, so blissful, that wherever they are they will be able to dispel the darkness.

'My effort is to make this whole earth a Buddhafield. Each of my sannyasins has to become a Buddhafield, he has to carry around himself the aroma of enlightenment, of love, of prayer. What can you give to your lovers, your beloveds, your wives, husbands, children, parents that is more precious than a taste of Buddhahood?

'I declare to you your Buddhahood. Each person is born to be a Buddha. Less than that won't do.'

So! His whole mischievous plan exposed at last. Bhagwan is not satisfied with his own enlightenment, he is not content with helping one or two of us to attain enlightenment; he wants to create a whole world of enlightened people, he wants enlightenment to be the natural state of mankind. And those of us who are here with him — those of us who have been privileged enough, blessed enough, wise enough, lucky enough to have heard his call and responded to it — are to be the vehicles through which it happens, the first of many, the mutants out of whom the next stage in the evolutionary process will evolve. Bhagwan wants it to happen here, now; he is not fooling around any more. He wants us *all* to get enlightened and to share our light with the rest of the world, to awaken people to their infinite possibilities, to awaken them to their own potential Buddhahood.

He is creating a Buddhafield here in Poona, where this can happen. A place where the energy is so high, the light so bright, that it will be impossible for us to go on sleeping for ever. We'll be forced to wake up, we'll be shattered and shocked out of our illusions and dreams. And when we've awakened — despite ourselves, despite all our efforts and cunning tricks to go on sleeping — he'll send us out into the world, he'll scatter us to the winds like so many dandelion seeds, so we can whisper the secret to others who are ready, so we can turn the world on.

Bhagwan is not just trying to push Chaitanya and me and Sheela and Arup and the rest of his 100,000 disciples into enlightenment; he is trying to create a new man, a new kind of being on earth. He calls this new man Zorba the Buddha. He would. It's not enough to just be a Buddha; he wants us to reclaim our bodies, reclaim our sense of joy and exuberance, to celebrate life. He'll use every trick he has to turn us

into this new man he has envisioned. He'll use therapies and meditations, he'll use communal living and work, he'll use relationships and aloneness, he'll use the power of his presence and the power of his absence, his cool love and his compassionate indifference, his own energy and the ever-increasing energy of the ashram/commune itself.

This man is not kidding!

If it wasn't so funny, I would be scared out of my mind. He doesn't want us to hold on to *anything*. As soon as we get complacent, as soon as we relax for a minute, as soon as we begin to feel comfortable or secure about anything at all, no matter what it is, he creates one of his ingenious devices and the ground disappears from beneath our feet; we're left suspended in mid-air above a bottomless chasm.

'Jump!' he seems to be telling us. 'It's beautiful here on the other shore. I highly recommend it.'

One step at a time, one foot in front of the other, I inch my way cautiously to the edge of the precipice. Three feet at a time, I leap my way from my comfortable position of safety to the edge. Slow or fast, one way or the other, I reach it. There's nothing to do finally but jump.

'Hi-ho, Silver!' I leap, I jump; a sudden gust of wind pushes me, I fall. The abyss is infinite, eternal. On and on I fall, moving faster and faster. There's no end to it. I disappear in the darkness, I'm surrounded by light. Suddenly, what felt like falling a moment before feels like flying now. There's no difference between the two; all dualities have disappeared. Down and up are the same thing when there's only space. Darkness goes so deep it becomes light, and light so bright it blinds you.

I don't know whether I'm in ecstasy or pain, sad or happy. When my mouth turns up, I call this overflowing of energy laughter; when it turns down, I call it crying. But it's all the same thing. All that changes is my definition of it, my attitude. What is is, and what ain't ain't. If we didn't put words around it, it would just be: a pure experience, with no qualifying adjectives attached to it, no judgments.

I have so much energy, I'm about to explode. I feel restless one minute and calm the next. I've lost the 'ability' to meditate; I can't sit still long enough. Yet I seem to turn people on just by my presence. I can see it happening over and over again these days. It's nothing I say or do, I can't even say it's me. It's something that's happening *in* me, which seems to be affecting others.

People come to me with their problems and go away feeling high. Not that the problems have been resolved; they've dropped. Someone is depressed. I walk into the room. Two minutes later they're not

depressed any more; they're laughing along with me, flying.

Santosh had a dream recently in which I taught him how to fly. He came over to me the next day to thank me — as if it was real, as if I had really taught him something. Who knows what he was talking about, who knows what it meant? It was his reality, not mine; something that was meaningful to him, not me. We're each the instruments for the other around here, even if we don't know what we're doing, or why.

Something seems to be pouring through me. It's not me; I'm as bewildered by it as everyone else. All I can do is let it happen. And enjoy it.

Meanwhile, Bhagwan sits there in his room, alone, not doing anything, and it goes on happening all around him. To me, to everyone else here. To his sannyasins all over the world. When we're going through a phase here at the ashram — everyone's having 'heart attacks' (love attacks), or everyone is cutting their hair for the first time in five years, or everyone is spontaneously beginning to buy red clothes instead of orange, or everyone is feeling ecstatic — the same thing seems to happen to sannyasins at the various centres abroad. They don't know, logically, rationally, through their minds, what's going on in Poona on a mundane, day-to-day level, but somehow, inexplicably, thousands of miles away, they're going through the same phases at the same time.

If I'm feeling good, the chances are that most of the people around here are too. So are most of the sannyasins at centres abroad. And if I'm feeling terrible, so is everyone else. It removes what's happening from the personal to some other level. We each interpret the energy in a different way, so we don't always know we're feeling the same thing, but the difference may be just a matter of interpretation, a matter of the mind's interference, the mind's tendency to define.

Some days, ecstasy is just in the air. Everyone who is not fighting it — who is not saying: 'I just lost my lover,' or 'my body's sick,' or 'I've just been fired from my job' — 'How can I possibly feel ecstatic? I *refuse* to feel it' — everyone who is not trying to impose his or her own momentary, limited attitude on existence, will feel it. We'll all be soaring together, each of us igniting the flame of the other, like thousands of candles on a cake. I can see how we'll all 'pop off' together — one of us getting enlightened and the flame of it jumping to another, and another, and another. Like the plague. But it won't be our bodies dying, it will be our egos. It won't be a death, but a rebirth.

Of course, when depression or sadness or jealousy is in the air, we all

pick up on that too. But the fact that everyone else is going through the same thing, changes it. Or at least changes one's view of it.

Sadness is there. You don't know that it's just something in the air, just the way the energy of existence is moving — chances are, you don't even believe in such superstitious nonsense — so you look around for causes. And of course they're there; you can always find them easily enough if you're looking for them. So you think: I'm sad because of this or that. Then your mind moves to the this or the that; you get away from the pure feeling of the energy, it becomes a mind-trip. You 'understand' what is happening; your mind is in control again.

Here, though, after a few hours, or a day or two at the most, you discover that half the people around you are also feeling sad. Each of them, naturally, has found a different reason to blame it on, but the mood is the same. You look at someone who is reciting to you their tale of woe. It's the same thing you're going through, the same! The whole thing becomes so impersonal, so ridiculous. How to take it seriously? Soon you're laughing in each other's arms.

And the next thing you know, everyone is laughing. Everyone's mood has changed, it's moved to the other polarity. You're all suddenly feeling wonderful.

Yet that, too, is only energy. That, too, is impersonal. A force that carries you along with it. You ride on the wave.

There are miracles happening here at Bhagwan's ashram. Day by day they become more apparent. But this is only the beginning. Someday the ashram boundaries themselves will disappear, the whole earth will be God's playground again. There will be no demarcations, no divisions between the inner world and the outer world, between the temple and the marketplace, between this shore and the other shore, between ashram life and Life. There will be nothing encircling us, enclosing us. The air will belong to us, the sky, the ocean, the trees; we'll regain our right to live on earth as if it were paradise.

We'll sip tea with all the Buddhas and Christs and Bhagwans, and laugh at the absurdity of all the suffering we chose for so long, not knowing that anything else was available. We'll join all the enlightened masters of the past in a huge belly-laugh that will resound around the world. Awakening those who hear it. Shocking them into awareness. Till they join our laughter.

The sound of laughter growing and growing, the earth humming with it. Hindus say the universe throbs with the sound *aum*. I think it throbs with the sound of laughter. But maybe they're the same thing.

Laughter and thanksgiving. An immense gratitude for everything that is.

I was walking down the street in a suburb of Boston a few years ago. Suddenly I heard Bhagwan's voice. Not like a message inside my head, but like something outside me. 'Mmmm, Satya,' he said. 'It's time you started to write a book about me.' I couldn't believe my ears. Bhagwan couldn't be talking to me; I didn't believe in things like that. It was my imagination. I ignored it.

Six months later, when Chaitanya and I returned to India, the first thing Bhagwan said to me was, 'Well, Satya, how is the book coming along, hmmm?' The rascal!

When the master tells you to do something, you might as well do it and be done with it. Eventually it will happen anyway. Eventually, despite yourself, the surrender comes.

'How can I write anything?' I asked Bhagwan at the time. 'I have nothing original to say. Everything I have to say you've already said.'

He laughed. 'So you plagiarize, you copy me. What's wrong with plagiarizing? There's nothing new to say in the world anyway; everything has already been said. But still it has to be told. Again and again.'

My words are poor imitations. Bhagwan's books say everything I try to say so much more beautifully than I could ever hope to. He speaks like a poet. He sings, he dances, he mesmerizes with his words. What he says, the Vedas have said, the Upanishads have said, the Bible, the Koran, the Gita have all said. None of it is new. Over and over again the same truths go on being revealed.

'You can *be* original,' Bhagwan says, 'but you can't think originally. A Buddha can be original — not in his thinking but in his being. The way he is is absolutely new; no one has ever been like that before. But when he talks, even a Buddha becomes unoriginal. When he uses language, the mind has to be used; and mind always comes from the past, language always comes from others. Even a Buddha has to use borrowed language. The moment Buddha says something, the originality is lost. But if you listen to Buddha, not to his words — if you

can have a glimpse of his being through his words – then you'll feel his originality.

'When you listen to me, listen to the gaps between the words, listen to the silence. Listen to *me*, not to what I say. Then an understanding will arise, a communion. My words are just an excuse. They're just playthings to keep you here, to keep you occupied. I'm not saying something to you; I'm being something to you. Listen to me in deep silence, in deep awareness. Be related to me.'

Bhagwan himself is the teaching. Not his words, not the words of his disciples, not the experiences we go through around him. His presence, his vibration. The more in tune we are with it, with him, the more in tune we are with existence and with our own higher being, our own Buddhahood.

Come! Join the celebration. Come breathe Bhagwan with us.

There are 250 Rajneesh meditation centres abroad and 200 in India. These are some of the main ones, which can be contacted for the name and address of the centre nearest you. If there is no reply, contact Rajneesh Foundation directly.

Australia

Sahajam, 17 Saleham Street, Victoria Park 6100, WA, Tel: 092-361-0639

Belgium

Mansarovar, 75 Avenue Edmond Mesens, 1040 Brussels

Brazil

Purnam, Caixa Postale 1946, Porto Alegre 90000, R.G. do Sul. Tel: 240673

Canada

Arvind, 2336 Vine Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6K 3K5, Tel: 734-9184

Costa Rica

Mouna, Apartado 10165, San Jose

Denmark

Anand Niketan, Skindergade 3, DK 1159, Copenhagen K, Tel: 01-117909

East Africa

Ananda Need, Kitisuru Estate, P.O. Box 72424, Nairobi, Kenya, Tel: Nairobi 582600

Archana, P.O. Box 82501, Mombasa, Kenya, Tel: 491368

England

Kalptaru, Top Floor, 10A Belmont Street, London NW1,

Tel: 01-485-3216

Nirvana, 82 Bell Street, London NW1, Tel: 01-262-0991 and 01-723-0145

France

Prempath, Place de la Mairie, 45390 Desmonts, Tel: (38) 33-65-92

Holland

Amitabh, Post Box 3280, 1001 AB Amsterdam, Tel: 020-221296

Rajneesh Therapie Instituut, 3e Van der Kunstraat 20, 2521 BC Den Haag, Tel: 070-896119

India

Shree Rajneesh Ashram, 17 Koregaon Park, Poona 411 001, Tel: 28127

Sagar Deep, 52 Ridge Road, Malabar Hill, Bombay 400 006, Tel: 814783

Raj Yoga, C 5/44 Safdarjang Development Area, Opp. I.I.T., Palam Road, New Delhi 16, Tel: 654533

Manisha, 'Jupiter', 33 Landons Road, P.B. 1019, Madras 600 010, Tel: 663118

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Asheesh, Post Box 278, Tahachal, Kathmandu, Tel: 14504

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Prabhat, The Dove House, Dovedale, Kolff Letter Box, RD2 Wakefield, Nelson

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Prem Sadan, 22 San Antonio Street, Magallanes Village, Makati, Metro Manila

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Tel. 43-2140

Anand Lok, Mehringdamm 61, 1 Berlin 61, Tel: 030-693-2901

Vihan, Urbanstrasse 64, 1000 Berlin 61, Tel: 691-7917

Satdharma, Amalienstrasse 38, 8000 Munich 40, Tel: 089-282-113

For a complete list of books by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, please contact
Rajneesh Foundation, 17 Koregaon Park, Poona, India 411 001.

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Roots and Wings: Talks on Zen

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

Roots and Wings is based on eleven Zen stories, followed by questions and answers. Religion has always been against 'roots' – worldly pleasures – and for 'wings' – renunciation. Bhagwan shows that there is no choice to be made, that wings cannot develop without roots, just as a plant cannot flower without a seed. We should accept the roots and explore them deeply and consciously, and they will blossom into wings. Bhagwan believes that life is not a problem to be solved, but a mystery to be lived, and these talks therefore do not give an explanation of the Zen stories but take us deeper into their mystery, towards an understanding of the heart.

'Eleven Zen stories are presented and Bhagwan gives his explanation of each at some length, and fine, perceptive, and illuminating it is too. He goes straight to the heart of the meaning and then explores facet after different facet of this central core. One comes away refreshed and instructed.' – *Yoga Today*

The Supreme Doctrine

Discourses on the Kenopanishad

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh

The seventeen lectures which form this book were delivered by Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh at a meditation camp held at Mount Abu, Rajasthan, to a group of disciples from both India and abroad. Bhagwan is an enlightened master, whose discourses have led to his recognition in both East and West as an important philosopher and mystic. His speculations upon the intangible and his attacks upon traditional religious assumptions are in many ways similar to those of Krishnamurti, Ouspensky and Gurdjieff.

In these lectures he discusses the sutras of the Kenopanishad, and answers the questions of his listeners, but stresses that the message of the Kenopanishad will become intelligible through meditation and non-verbal means, and that direct explanation is impossible. These are Bhagwan's responses to the Kenopanishad, not his commentaries, and the knowledge he imparts is not verbal but intuitive. He offers a challenge to his disciples and readers: to use his responses as a stepping-stone to penetrate the mystery of the Upanishads, to enter into their dimension, and in this way to gain the self-awareness to understand them.

Routledge & Kegan Paul

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Death Comes Dancing

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh is an enlightened master, regarded by many as being of the calibre of the Buddha or Jesus, and whose significance as a philosopher and mystic is increasingly being recognized by people from all walks of life. Visitors from all over the world come to his ashram in Poona where, every day of the year, he delivers a discourse on a variety of religious themes. The ashram in Poona is the largest growth centre in the world, combining the resources and techniques of Esalen and *est* with those of the many traditional religions.

Death Comes Dancing, written by a disciple of Bhagwan, is a spiritual diary describing the transformation of a personality under the master's guidance. Clearly and honestly presented, it tackles all the questions that an outsider might want to ask, and is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand what really goes on at this life-affirming ashram, and the increasingly powerful influence that the 'orange' movement is exerting around the world.

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